

STOCK CINEMA

NUMBER 5

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TWO-
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Your Guide to Cult Movies,
Arthouse Oddities,
Drive-In Swill, and
Underground Obscurities!!

ALBERT Finney

now goes psycho in



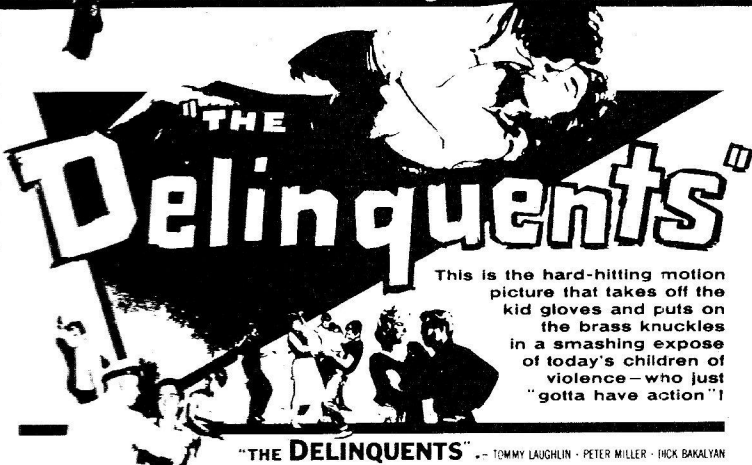
the MGM Presentation

**NIGHT
MUST
FALL**

ALBERT FINNEY—THE
SENSATIONAL YOUNG STAR
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SUNDAY MORNING" AND "LUTHER"

also starring
SUSAN HAMPSHIRE

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This is the hard-hitting motion
picture that takes off the
kid gloves and puts on
the brass knuckles
in a smashing expose
of today's children of
violence—who just
"gotta have action!"

"THE DELINQUENTS" — TOMMY LAUGHLIN — PETER MILLER — TUCK BAKALYAN

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS: In my last edition, I warned everyone that I was a lazy bastard, and wouldn't have another issue out for nearly a year. True to form, I didn't lie, and eleven months later, here's another slopping of cinematic dementia. But before I go off on some drunken, belligerent tangent, let's get the official crap out of the way...

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY: I do NOT plan on spending all my waking hours locked inside my shithole East Village apartment cranking out reviews. I do my best to have a life (pathetic as it might be). Therefore, I make no false claims to having a regular publication schedule. All I promise is that I'll try to get one issue out every year. If readers don't want to miss any upcoming issues, they can send me cash for future editions and I'll stick them on my mailing list. And despite the ever-increasing cost of living essentials (rent, liquor and the occasional woman), the price of the mag remains the same...Plus, to repeat my past offer, I'm always glad to trade issues of SC with any other film 'zine editor. You show me yours, I'll show you mine, and if I've got the space, I'll toss you a plug in my next issue. (Big fuckin' deal, eh?)

BACK ISSUES: I'm still getting letters from readers asking if there's any way to get copies of my first two editions of SHOCK CINEMA. Not a chance in hell, my friends. They're long gone, and unless some enterprising publisher wants to reprint 'em (or better yet, reprint ALL my 'zine reviews, including the hundreds I spat out for my first film 'zine, SLIMETIME), they're history. I still have copies of #3 and 4 if you missed out on 'em, at the same cost. But grab 'em quick.

Enough of that standard bullshit. Because this issue was a bastard to crank out. As the years spin by, it's getting harder to find films that are even mildly amusing, much less worth spending (1) two hours of your life watching and (2) the energy writing up a review for the piece of shit. I guess this type of ennui has hit a lot of 'zine folks in recent times, because the scene seems to be drying up before my eyes. In the '80s, any bozo with a typewriter/pen/crayon (and access to their boss' copy machine) was sending out some type of rag. Spurred on by the trinity of Michael Weldon, Rick Sullivan and Bill Landis, you couldn't open your mail box without some high school dropout cranked on cheap speed ranting about the joys of ILSA flicks. Nowadays, it's gone in two distinct directions. In rare cases, the writers have turned to slick mags with a more 'careful' approach, (like FILM THREAT, which went from being one of the most savage tomes on the planet, to a HUSTLER-owned, self-righteous, SPY-wannabee. At the very least I hope Christian Gore is making a ton of money, because if you're gonna sell your ass in the marketplace, the least you can do is get a good price for it). The other side of the coin has 'zine editors either chucking it all or cutting back on production so much that you barely know they're alive (present company included).

Here's where I start whining nostalgically, so you can either turn the fucking page, or deal with it...Almost a year has gone by since I've had the chance to ramble, and the one big change is that I'M GOD-DAMNED TIRED. Of everything. I'm tired of listening to crackhead neighbors screaming at each other at four in the morning. Tired of living in a city held together by shit and dirt and misery and pretentious fucks roaming the streets, living off their trust funds. Tired of listening to the bullshit spewed out by the media, while knowing full well that no matter what president we have, the same old shit endures. Tired of dealers trying to sell me oregano every day, rain or shine, on the same fucking corner for two solid years. Tired of vapid, noisy moviegoers who can't seem to understand a simple storyline. Tired of passing out every night, instead of simply falling asleep. Tired of getting a phone call, and being told that an old college friend has committed suicide. Tired of drinking yourself into a stupor, because the woman you love will never love you. Tired of stupid movies, ugly pushy people, roach 'n' mice infested apartments, and

Editor/Publisher: Steve Puchalski
Layout and design: Steve Puchalski
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the type of gutter loneliness that makes you want to bar your apartment door behind you every night. And tired of the realization that the best thing about living in New York City is that you don't feel like the most miserable person on the face of the earth.

And another thing I'm REALLY tired of is this angry, backstabbing bullshit that's been going on between 'zine writers for the past year, which NONE of the readers give a rat's ass about. The 'zine world is turning into an outlet for people who want to relive their glory days in elementary school, when they ratted to the teacher on kids they didn't like. To give you one example, a recent issue of FILM THREAT VIDEO GUIDE had a letter to the editor from some greasy, paranoid homunculus, who called me a "bootlegging scumbag". And dim-witted FILM THREAT went on to mention that indeed, it was because of this video bootlegging that I kept my 'zine, THE GORE GAZETTE, solvent. Now, aside from feeling honored to suddenly be proclaimed the editor of the G.G., I ask any of my longstanding readers, have I EVER sold a video through my magazine? The point I'm making is that if editors feel the need to spit out this type of vindictive, erroneous garbage, why don't they close their bedroom door next time and masturbate alone, instead of spattering the jism onto everyone else? Or rather, why not save the bile for the people who REALLY deserve it—the politicians, the fatcat businessmen, the racist, homophobic, sexist hate mongers. Or maybe just asswipe filmmakers...

Ahh, I miss the old days. When you had a choice between more than just two 42nd Street theatres (even those two show nothing but studio swill nowadays, but at least you get a double bill for six bucks, and can still light a bong on the front row without hassles). Or hitting the Dive on W. 29th Street for the Gore Gazette Film Series, featuring classics like THEY DON'T CUT THE GRASS ANYMORE, as we sprawled on the floor, chugging the six packs we'd snuck in. Or visiting the long-gone St. Marks Cinema for a midnight show of some twisted mess like FINGERS (with director Toback turning up after the show, obviously deranged on some locally distributed drug, and babbling for over an hour with the glassy-eyed crowd of junkies). But all those days are gone, and what with Weldon and his PSYCHOTRONIC shop making the move upstate, away from the urban chaos, I'm afraid the NYC sleaze-scene is soon gonna resemble the Mary Celeste...So on that happy note, I leave you with another edition of SHOCK CINEMA, chock full of obscurities and irrational opinions. Grab a few cold ones, kick back, and keep cool. 3/15/93

LETTERS and FILM FLOTSAM

Beginning with this issue of SHOCK CINEMA, in addition to the usual Film Flotsam column (in which readers were able to send in suggestions for their favorite obscure flicks), I'm including some of the more interesting letters I received. I only had the space to run a few this time around, but the next edition will (hopefully) include more comments from the masses, whether it's bitching about some piece of trash I raved about, or just sending in more of their faves.

ANT TIMPSON; Auckland, New Zealand.

...I feel the latest shock is by far the best of the bunch, it contains reviews of things that I actually wanted to read about! I don't know if you get much feedback on it but your mainstream round up at the end is always compulsive reading. We usually agree 100%, especially on THE REFLECTING SKIN, jesus plasse the razor blades please!!! The ending pissed me off to begin with and then I thought, shit, how else could it end?...THE DARK BACKWARD sounds like a loser, anything that Film Threat shoves down people's throat as a cult phenomenon, leave me out. They fuck me off with their little incestuous circle of 'in' friends, just cos they swill beers back with some asshole at a party they feel inclined to jack off about their latest offering. Let the films speak for themselves and stop all the back patting, it's getting sickening...I'm really pissed off that I didn't realize you moved into NYC. I was there in January, and hooked up with Weldon and met some others. Weldon wasn't the type to go out and hit pubs to get comaed but from the sounds of it we could've downed a few REDBACKS laced with 151. I had a couple days in NYC where I was nearly dumped in jail, but still made it back to Vegas on time to lose everything...Maybe on my next trip I'll write to you first. Let's hope we get to chug a beer back one of these days.

JOHN GORDON, Boston MA

SHOCK CINEMA is a great little zine. Picked up a copy at the Boston University book store. Both amazed and amused by the trash that's out there.

Next time you're P.O.'ed about a movie theater, send a nasty letter (not too nasty) to the executive headquarters. You'll never go to their theaters again. You'll tell your 200 relatives not to go. You'll complain to the Attorney General and Better Biz Bureau. Etc. They'll send you free passes just to shut you up. It always works for me. Keep the complaints legitimate. But look around for complaints. Air conditioning too cold. Sound too loud. Vent rattling above your head. Sticky seats. Put down the date, time you saw the movie, that you made an attempt to contact the manager, get his name if possible.

Complaints to food companies always bring coupons for free food. You found a mouse in your Crispy Critters cereal. Or something in your clam dip bit you. Or something flew out of your Puffed Wheat cereal. I've been known to make up complaints. Lotsa companies don't have good quality control, so

they set up Consumer Service Departments.

When making a complaint send along the control number found somewhere on the package. If you don't buy the product, copy the number from a package on the supermarket shelf. If you don't want to spend postage to complain, check the 800 number directory, as many companies have free phone service. Say you're contacting the Food and Drug Administration. You'll get twice as many coupons.

[Ed.: Thanks for all your tips, which are sure to come in handy with SHOCK CINEMA's notoriously deadbeat readership.]

MILES WOOD, London, England

Thanks for the copy of SHOCK CINEMA; excellent stuff. Agree with you somewhat about WHORE. Thanks to the now defunct Palace I managed to catch a Press showing of the film where my occasional snigger during the film's tackier moments gained disapproving glances from the woman seated next to me. Afterwards I managed to get into the press conference (not one to scoff at free wine and food at lunchtime) where the aforementioned female (a somewhat humourless feminist wouldn't ya know) ripped into the film citing the laughter of the 'man' who sat next to her during the screening as indicative of the sort of unwelcome reactions a film like this would get. Unfortunately I decided to keep schtum expected Ken to leap to my defense by saying something along the lines that there's nought wrong with injecting some (black) humour into a film about a serious topic. But no! Unbelievably Ken said this was a serious approach, and growing tired of this woman's rantings passed on to another point. Whew! Still, at least I got Theresa to sign a photo for me (no film she's in is entirely without worth), and Ken regularly comes to the cinema where I work (he lives just round the corner) and often annoys patrons by continually leaving his seat to buy booze!

Sorry about the shortage of reviews for Film Flotsam. I had to draw em up double quick. I'll do more next time...

RACE WITH THE DEVIL (1975). Warren Oates and Peter Fonda (and their missus) decide to take a trailer holiday but en route witness a ritual killing by a group of Satanists, and find themselves hotly pursued across the highways of Texas. More a chase than a horror movie this film (seemingly virtually forgotten in the States) is energetically directed by Jack Starrett and the final image of the trailer ringed by fire is a chilling and memorable one.

LISA (1990). Gary Sherman, who made the classic cannibals-in-the-underground movie DEATH LINE, here turns his hand to the killer-on-the-prowl formula in what could almost pass for a TV movie. Staci Keenan (of MY TWO DADS) spends most of her free time making anonymous calls, and after bumping into a guy on her way back from the supermarket she's soon having long phone conversations with him, hoping to set him up with her nagging divorced mum. He doesn't realize she's just a young girl; she doesn't realize



he's the local serial killer. Sherman does occasionally generate some suspense (such as the scene where Staci hides in the back of the killer's car) but there's none of the sleaze or charged violence present in earlier work such as *VICE SQUAD*.

EXPRESSE IM FOLTERKELLER. Operating somewhere in the area between horror film and pornography (Japanese porn is somewhat difficult to define due to the lack of any obvious hardcore trademarks) I know little about this film other than it was directed by Norifurno Suzuki. Dubbed into German it concerns a man who abducts young women—some schoolgirls—and rapes and tortures them before killing them. One of his victims is a popular singer who he selects because a group of her fans accidentally knock him over, and when his father by chance arrives to stop a woman escaping he joins them caged in the dungeon (he is apparently partly responsible for the state of mind of this Oriental Buffalo Bill, though having no understanding of German, some of the film remains a mystery). The intensity of some of the scenes puts this film alongside *HENRY, PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER* as a study of the mind and methods of madness, and as an uncomfortably disturbing viewing experience.

GET CARTER (1971). Michael Caine (who's never been better) goes to Newcastle and dispatches the gangsters responsible for his brother's death. Mike Hodges' violent thriller brilliantly conveys the brutality of the underworld (as such it's comparable with *PERFORMANCE*) and makes wonderfully atmospheric use of its North East England locations. The Human League covered the title theme on "Dare" but don't let that put you off.

THE VERY EDGE (1962). Anne Heywood stars in this thriller, produced by her hubbie Raymond Stross, as a mother-to-be who is attacked in her own home; she fights off the assailant but the obsessed man continues to menace her, creating strains in her marriage (to Richard Todd). Jack Hedley plays the 'tec on the case. Like *THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE* the film benefits from the realism that infused British genre filmmaking of the time, and director Cyril Frankel plays up the more lurid, exploitable elements, prefiguring the stalk-and-slash movies of the '70s.

LOLA. Made by Bigas Luna (who directed the film-within-a-film classic *ANGUISH*) back in his Spanish homeland, this stars Angela Molina (familiar to most Bunuel fans from *THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE*) who leaves her factory job and violent, drunken boyfriend, for the big city and hopefully a better life. However, her past continues to haunt her. Like *ANGUISH* the script doesn't follow the expected path, and the film confirms Luna as a talent to watch.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (1976). Apparently this exists in its original form as a hardcore film but I've only seen the British cut, which fortunately doesn't suffer from any obvious cuts. This strange sex film has Catherine Burgess spending a lot of time in the attic getting off in front of a mirror, and in the process conjuring up a demon—in the form of porn star Jamie Gillis—who beckons her to join him on the other side. She soon finds herself losing her grasp of reality (her husband thinks she's neurotic) while the creepy Gillis sets his sights on seducing her decidedly young looking daughter (Laura Nicholson). Unless he's worked under another moniker, this seems to be director Jonas Middleton's only credited

work [Ed: Middleton directed another Gillis flick, *ILLUSIONS OF A LADY*, in 1974], but this is truly imaginative filmmaking—the surreal finale with Burgess trapped in some hellish wasteland is like something out of Pasolini via Bosch.

THE MECHANIC (1972). Lewis John Carlino once had something of a rep—he scripted *SECONDS* and directed *THE GREAT SANTINI* which featured a definitive Bob Duvall performance—but this was gone for good after he made *CLASS*. Sometime in between he wrote this Chuck Bronson thriller (a.k.a. *KILLER OF KILLERS*) directed by Michael Winner which is way superior to any of the other formula junk that the star and director have churned out. The wordless opening "hit" could be straight out of a Melville film; there's a weird scene where Bronson and Jan-Michael Vincent stand and watch while the latter's girlfriend slits her wrists; and the explosive ending is simply a classic.

MARK MOREY; Amarillo, TX

I got a copy of SC#4 from The Savage Eye Catalogue and think it's as good or better than any publication covering similar subject matter...I did run out to see **SHAKES THE CLOWN** on your recommendation. While wonderful in parts, I couldn't help but wish that Goldthwait had been more irresponsible in his depiction of alcoholism. The A.A.-themed segments and negative portrayals while surely laudable slowed down the nihilistic absurdities..."Reponsible attitudes" may be to the 90s what unnecessary romantic interludes were to horror, mystery and sci-fi flicks (esp. comedies) of the 30s-60s. Think how much better The Marx Brothers would have been without the love interests. Alternatively, think how shitty W.C. Fields'

movies would have been if the real-life horrors of his alcohol addiction would have had to be included along with his wonderful misanthropy and anarchism. Oh well. The "Twisted Balloon" scenes were well worth of price of admission.

TRISTER KEANE; New York City

Here are a few more obscure titles. Although *BUFFALO ROAM* has been on video for years, I don't think any of the others have ever been released by any U.S. distributor. But if anyone even has bootleg copies, I'd love to see them again.

CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING (1974).

French director Jacques Rivette likes making long movies (many have run over four hours!), and they're rarely heard of outside of film festivals and cinema textbooks. But this relatively short feature of his (only 190 minutes) was a major cult hit in Europe, and in turn, played for about two weeks in America. There's almost no way to describe its "plot" in less than novella form, since it magically warps reality, intermingles characters, runs parallel storylines, and improvises at will. Essentially, it's the story of two young women who meet, become roommates, and enter a family drama in hopes of saving a child from two murderous women. But leave all semblance of normal cinematic viewing at the door, because Rivette breaks

all boundaries and slowly seduces you into this one-of-a-kind whimsical experience where everything is more than it appears.

DEALING: OR THE BERKELEY-TO-BOSTON FORTY-BRICK LOST-BAG BLUES (1972). I first saw this film when I was far too young to understand its counterculture edge. Now I wish I could give



Jacques Rivette's

"Celine and Julie go boating"

it another chance. Starring the uncharismatic Robert F. Lyons, plus John Lithgow, Charles Durning and the always-knockout Barbara Hershey, this is a black comedy about a pair of hippie kids transporting kilos of grass across the country, and eventually getting ripped off by corrupt cops. Based on a book by Michael Crichton and his brother Douglas, its matter-of-fact acceptance of drug use really pissed off its distributor (Warner Brothers), who got revenge by barely releasing it. Directed by almost-forgotten cult filmmaker Paul Williams (*THE REVOLUTIONARY, OUT OF IT*).

THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY DRINKER

(1988). No, it's not a sequel to *BARFLY*. Instead, it's a low-key, Italian art film that never made it to the U.S., directed by Ermanno Olmi and starring Rutger Hauer (in a performance that proves the guy can really act, despite all the B-movie action junk he's been starring in recently). Rutger plays a town alcoholic, who's given a chance to redeem himself when a stranger suddenly gives him 200 francs. A little too pious and heavy-handed for its own good, but at other times, quite elegant in its simplicity.

WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM (1980).

Speaking of drinkers, I'd like to defend the movie which, for years, has been trashed by critics, viewers and Hunter S. Thompson fanatics alike. Yes, the film's a piece of bastardized shit, and no, it doesn't do justice to Thompson's incredible written legacy. But I can't think of another human on the planet who could do a better job portraying the good Doctor than Bill Murray. The guy has every nuance, every inflection down to a hilt, and captures the man's acidic, drug-confused, volatile edge all too well. Despite director Art(less) Linson's misguided notion to twist the movie into an *ANIMAL HOUSE* for the amphetamine set, the spirit of Thompson clings like a barnacle. Many scenes are etched indelibly in my memory (the "pigs in the wilderness" monologue to Nixon first comes to mind), and even though it never gets weird enough for me, for now, it'll have to do.

PLAY IT AS IT LAYS (1972). There are two primary reasons to search out this film. First, is to see another star turn by Tuesday Weld, the most underrated actress of the '60s/'70s (and whose best work—*PRETTY POISON*, *A SAFE PLACE*, *LORD LOVE A DUCK*—is all unavailable on video). And second, is to see another strange outpouring from director Frank Perry who, early in his career, made some incredibly offbeat movies (*LAST SUMMER*, *RANCHO DELUXE*, *THE SWIMMER*), before turning into a shithole Hollywood clone. This film is a biting drama about the parasitic, destructive nature of the film biz, with Weld playing a burnt-out starlet. An epic of nihilism, charting her rise and fall, complete with alcohol, drugs, abortion, suicide, and pretentious Tinseltown tools. Featuring Tony Perkins as Weld's gay friend, biker-movie regular Adam Roarke as Weld's auteur hubbie, and lovable Chuck McCann (from *Sid and Marty Krofft's FAR OUT SPACE NUTS*) as the abortionist!

DIANA MURPHY, San Francisco, CA.

...Glad to see someone else remembers some of the incredible movies that came out during the 60s. I lived in New York City during that period, and frequented theatres like the Charles, the Evergreen and the Elgin, and double bills of *CHAFED ELBOWS* and *SCORPIO RISING*. I only wish someone would begin distributing more of these on video, since my memory is hazy due to the influences I viewed

them under. **REVOLUTION** was a great documentary on the Haight-Asbury scene at its peak. By the time it came to theaters, the summer of love was over, and it already had a nostalgic feel. I'm sure the movie is badly dated nowadays, with its free love, free grass, flower children, and communes. The soundtrack featured Quicksilver Messenger Service. Speaking of documents from that era, **YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT** was an

terribly silly movie, but also a perfect example of the Sunset Strip-based hippie cinema. The audience is shown a little of everything: Love-ins, Be-ins, Protests, and plenty of drug-seated young men and women. Happily lacking the heavy-handed proselytizing which weighed down many of these movies. Amongst the musical acts captured for posterity was a pre-*LAUGH-IN* Tiny Tim, who sings wonderful renditions of "Memphis, Tennessee" and "I Got You Babe".

THE PSYCHOTRONIC 60's by "Asa, The Chessplayer".

It's 1961, you're a Columbia College dropout and the junior chess champion of New York. Where do you end up? "The Chess and Checker Club of NY," affectionately known as the "Flea House," at 212 West 42nd Street. The chess hustling business being kind of slow during the day—a guy has to find something to do with himself, not including going to work, of course, and I hadn't yet discovered the racetrack—I arrived at 42nd Street. And there came into view a phenomenon one could not miss—*THE MOVIES*! First in sight was the New Amsterdam, and back then there were about six theaters on each side of the street between 7th and 8th

Avenues. But while much has been written about that portion of "The Street" in various magazines, there was also a block between 6th and 7th. Here were about five theaters specializing in films that showed off female flesh. Some were filmed performances of well-known strippers—Tempest Storm, Candy Barr, Lilly St. Cyr. Others showed B&W "roughies" like *THE DEFILERS* and *SATAN'S BED*. Most amusing were early Russ Meyer films like *COMMON LAW CABIN* and *LORNA*. All of these theaters showed numerous Trailers of more exciting films to come. The previews of *SAPHO DARLING* played for two years before it actually arrived!

Up on 50th Street was a place that specialized in S&M. *OLGA'S GIRLS*, *THE CURSE OF HER FLESH*, etc. There was also a movie house for Spanish films, and the Queen of these Spanish "B's" was Isabel Sarli. Other well-known stars were Isela Vega and Marisa Mell. Sarli was a dark-haired beauty of epic proportions. It seems to me that she looked like stripper-actress Raven de La Croix. With some better scripts and direction Sarli would have been a superstar.

I'll never forget trying out a new theater on 52nd Street. *LONE-SOME COWBOYS* sounded like it might be an action western, but when the shower scene showed all men, I knew I was in the wrong place! The BEST writer of what we now call exploitation films was Bob Cresse. Cresse was a master of unusual touches and surprise endings. I could give a complete review of *HOT SPUR*, *THE SCAVENGERS*, and *LOVE CAMP No.7*—if anyone's interested. They all do exist on video, so start hunting.

In 1966 I was drafted into the U.S. Army, but not before seeing the unforgettable *FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!* There I won the First Army Chess Championship, but was subjected to PG-rated movie fare—lots of Elvis musicals and the like. One great film they did



show by accident was SANDS OF THE KALAHARI. And the ultimate irony—I had to pull KP at a mess hall known as "The Big Deuce"!

In addition, here's a few of the best, seldom-seen films on video.

Comedy, tragedy, romance, male rape, motorcycle racing, penis measuring—a little of something for everyone! This is **SPETTERS (1980)**, directed by Paul Verhoeven—filmed in gorgeous color, with a young Rutger Hauer and introducing the sensual Renee Soutendijk. I remember when the film premiered in New York. Renee was hailed as "The New Bardot." Unfortunately, she didn't quite make it—ending up as a robot in **EVE OF DESTRUCTION!** Try **SPETTERS**—it delivers!

THE SCAVENGERS (1972) is a combination sexploitation, blaxploitation and western from the team of Bob Cresse and R.L. Frost. A theme song, cutting dialogue, and an exciting story make **THE SCAVENGERS** the very best film of its type. Cresse borrows tricks from older movies. In one scene, a guy is shot with a ramrod—it happened before in **ACROSS THE WIDE MISSOURI (1951)** with Clark Gable! The title itself turns out to be a triple-entendre! And the film ends with a classic line reminiscent of "Rosebud" and "I Steal".

THE BLACK CAT (1934) with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi is not a horror film and has nothing to do with Edgar Allen Poe's tale! This brilliant film from Edgar G. Ulmer features fantastic sets, haunting music (by Bach), and superb star chemistry evolving around themes of hate, revenge, occult religious practices, and an "unnatural fear of CATS!". Best of all—they play chess for the girl!

STUART WEST; Mission, Kansas

Ron Ormond's **THE GRIM REAPER** and **39 STRIPES** -- These incredible short two films are masterpieces of exploitation made even better by the fact that they were commissioned by a Church as "recruitment films". The **39 STRIPES** is Ormond's variation on a prison movie, complete with whipping and torture scenes, while the unbelievable **GRIM REAPER** can best be described as a religious horror film. This little jewel has terrible acting, car racing, an evil father who drinks beer on Sunday with his son, S&M scenes, a snake running rampant and biting numerous people in a Biblical flashback, bizarre monsters and sinners in a surprisingly effective trip to Hell and of course, a sweaty, slick-faced cameo by Jerry Falwell! A real feel-good film...I can't believe that any church would've been happy with the insane results that they were delivered!

RIKKO-O -- Wow! Do the body parts fly in this one! Fun, over-the-top villains and outrageous comic book violence make this Asian release a never-boring wonder! Based on the Japanese Manga, this takes place in a prison in the future, where our hero rights wrongs just because he's a good guy. While watching this, I was reminded of the feeling I got when I first viewed Cronenberg's **VIDEODROME**. Even though they're nothing alike, both films filled me with a sort of anticipatory dread of when next things might go "squish"! A new high-score in "eyeball-popping-out-of-the-head scenes".

BLOOD DELIRIUM -- What an insane film! This cheap Italian (are there any other kind?) horror movie boasts a good performance by John Philip Law (yep, you heard right) as sort of a would-be Van Gogh styled, tortured artist whose muse just happens to be his dead wife. Oh, and there's old Gordon Mitchell as his shirtless, right-hand man

who wants to hump everything in sight be it dead or alive! Did I mention the out-of-nowhere Shirley MacLaine New Age ending with friendly spirits (or are they Martians?) saving the day? Directed by Sergio Bergonzelli, the film is a constantly-shifting, goofy one-of-a-kind experience.

IS THERE SEX AFTER DEATH? -- A swinging '60s take-off of those so-called "swinging '60s sex documentaries" has host Buck Henry taking us, the unfortunate viewers, to some places where we would've rather not gone in the first place. Funny, though. Yuck! Look out for the nudist dancers! Yow, that one old, skinny guy could put an eye out with those "gyrations". Will someone please give him a fig leaf?

KYRA -- Enzo G. Castellari's only horror film is a good film in the erotic horror wasteland that is usually inhabited by Jess Franco. The only difference being this film has style, class, a budget, talent, atmosphere, and is quite erotic. Too bad I don't understand what the hell it's about! It looks cool, though. Get it from Video Search of Miami as they recently subtitled it in English.

WHITE DOG -- A rarely seen Samuel Fuller film that isn't what you would expect from this great and gritty action director. The plot involves a "white dog" (thusly named because it was trained by a

white bigot to attack people of other races) and the attempts of a brave black scientist to cure it. Surprisingly effective and moving, this film was apparently accused of being racist when it was first released and if anything, it's a powerful anti-racism film! I'm astounded that I'm actually recommending a film with Kristy McNichol, Burl Ives and Parker Stevenson in it!

RANCHO DELUXE -- Funny, low-key modern-day "western" that's always been a favorite about a couple of rustlers. Made exceptional by its literate Thomas McGuane script, a wonderful cast of character actors (my personal favorite being Slim Pickins, of course) and understated direction that refuses to bow down to mainstream sensibilities.

THE MAD BOMBER -- A '70s schlockster made fun by the late Chuck Conners' portrayal of the title character. It's a real kick to see this psychotic, Bible-toting, deep-

sideburned guy walking down the street, singling out litterers and giving them a piece of his mind. And Neville Brand shows up as a bonus pervert!

THE BLOOD STAINED BUTTERFLY -- One of my favorite Giallos. Excellent direction by Duccio Tessari is stylish and utilizes music in an extremely superior manner. The script is sharp and obviously well-researched for a change, with great detail given to police procedural (and it's not boring as one would think). It delves into character a bit more than is the norm and yes, I found myself surprised by the typically twisty denouement. A perfect introduction to this great genre. (On the other end is poor, always-slammed Al Brescia's **NUDE GIRL FOUND DEAD IN THE PARK**. People need to give this cheesy director a break, for this was a shockingly-fun Giallo. And once again, the ending actually surprised me...I'm either getting dumber or more naive...).

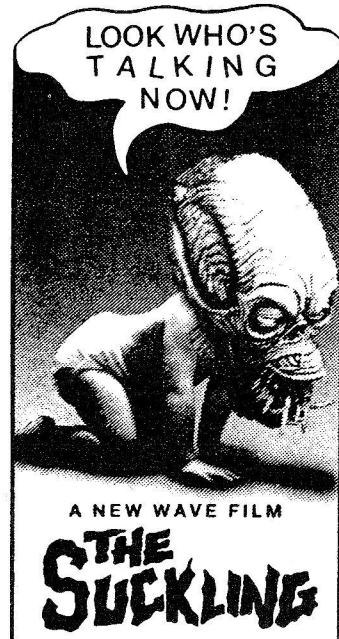
ENRAPTURE -- A real guilty pleasure. Alright, I know that Chuck Vincent was responsible for all those terrible teenage sex comedies that are always on late-night TV, but personally, I think that his "erotic thrillers" were pretty damn good! My favorite is **ENRAPTURE** which

Oh give me a home, with a low interest loan,
A cowgirl and two pickup trucks.

A color TV, all the beer should be free,
And that, man, is Rancho Deluxe.



features porno stars in all the main roles, some surprisingly good satire on the life of an actor in New York, an interesting script, a few good performances, some actual suspense and best of all, an actual



palpable sense of sleaziness that the new onslaught of mainstream "thrillers" tries to buy off with a mega-budget and commercial directors. Give it up, guys...This here's the real thing. Hell, it's practically a documentary. It's really too bad that Vincent died because I think he had found his forte. Also recommended: THRILLED TO DEATH, A WOMAN OBSESSED and Vincent's "art thriller", DE-RANGED.

THE SUCKLING -- Highly effective, low-budget "pro-life horror film". Made in New York, the plot details a young couple's decision (well his, at least) to have an abortion in a warehouse. Of course the fetus is deposited down in the sewers, where upon gnawing on some toxic waste...voila! Instant, angry

monster. Good effects and acting overcome cliched characters and you really can't tell it's a low budget when compared to some mainstream schlock being spewed out these days.

CAPERCITA Y PULGARCITO CONTRA LOS MONSTRUOS -- A Mexican "children's film" that is a wonderment to behold! This is one of a series of LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD films that was made in Mexico in the '60s that's just chock full of cheezy monsters, goofy situations and inane song numbers. (C'mon, is there anyone who really enjoyed song numbers in movies when they were a kid?) Sure it's in spanish, but I've never seen so many colorful, patchwork, thrown-together monsters in one film before! And that's what really counts to us kids after all, extremely high monster count.

NIGHT WARNING [a.k.a. **Butcher, Baker, Nightmare Maker**] -- I'm not sure what exactly the makers of this film had in mind when they made it, but it's a psycho-thriller with homophobic overtones. Some great over-the-top performances make this sucker soar to new heights of insanity. You've got Susan Tyrell walking around axing people in a daze; disco-haired Jimmy MacNichol being the recipient of a slo-mo milk pouring; TV superstar Julia Duffy exposing her breasts; and, my favorite, Bo Svenson as a homosexual-hating, bigoted, sexually harassing police detective! I wasn't certain until the end of this film that the makers weren't making ol' Bo the hero of this curious pic! And what an opening! Look out for that rail!

RALFI REY; Westmont, N.J.

Greetings and salutations from "the cesspool of humanity"—Camden County, New Jersey!!!!...Trister Keane and me, that makes two people who viewed BONE, the worst black exploitation flick I ever saw!! It played on a double bill with THE BUS IS COMING

at the Midway Palace in downtown Camden (October 1972). What Keane failed to mention in the article was that BONE suffered from a busted plot that was sloppily covered up by Cohen's artistic bullshit pretensions about colored boys and the like...If you want quality product try THE COOL WORLD, a 1964 Negro classic starring Hampton Clanton, with Clarence Williams the 3rd in a small role as Blood. Harlem gangs on the prowl, mid-60's style! TRUCK TURNER starring "Black Moses" Isaac Hayes is a natural gas, although when I originally paid to see it (at the Midway on a double bill with TOGETHER BROTHERS, July 1974), I wasn't sure whether to laugh or scream!

Here's my personal Flotsam:

1. Robert Reed Remembered: **SECRET NIGHT CALLER**. Made for ABC-TV in 1975, Rob plays an ultra-conservative family bloke (much like the "Papa Brady" role) by day—but when the evening sun goes down he chucks everything in favor of cheap thrills and obscene phone calls! Eventually, a sleazy striptease artist with treason on her mind figures it all out and attempts to blackmail him. Reed gives a credible performance but foxy Elena Giftos steals the show as "Chloe".

2. They Wandered in From the City of San Juan Without a Dime: **HEROINA (1965)**. Up to this point, most films dealing with Puerto Ricans and their social problems were written and directed by Hollywood Jews and featured casts comprised of Italian New Yorkers. This seedy little gem filmed in grainy black and white in the cruel summer of '65 up in Spanish Harlem stands tall on the merits of a Puerto Rican native, producer/director/writer Mitchell-Melendez, and a solid cast of "New Yoricans" headed by Jamie Sanchez (Rod Steiger's restless employee in THE PAWNBROKER). Excellent musical score by Charlie Palmier, and equally interesting "Latin Boogaloo" performances by Kako y Su Combo and Olga Guillot. Spanish w/English subtitles.

3. Italian "Sexy Comedy": **THE LADY DOCTOR (1958)**. Fuck Marilyn! My nomination for Hollywood's best buns in the 1950's is Abbe Lane! Before "Charo" there was "Abbe", a sexy Jewish girl from Brooklyn who could do it all—sing, dance, act, tease, and pretend to be married (to hubby Xavier Cugat). This flick is your typical two-bit spaghetti-snapping Italian fiasco of the '50s. Not very memorable, but worth watching because of Abbe and co-star Vittorio DeSica.

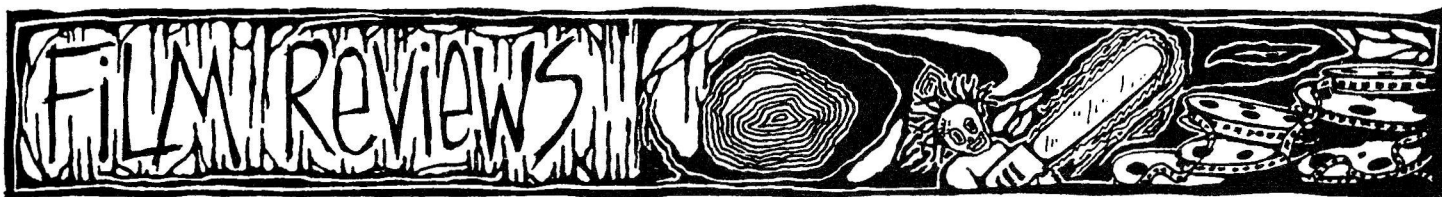
NBC-TV presented this flick as part of their "Saturday Night at the Movies" series in 1966. Black and white.

4. Roberta Findlay a.k.a. Anna Riva: **BODY OF A FEMALE (1964)**. Findley's first entry (I think) features Roberta/Anna as Cindy, a Coney Island stripper who becomes the object of a wealthy pervert's obsession (mostly S/M with infantile overtones). Anna swims naked, is tortured and finally is rescued by Bruno (Lem Amaro). Black and white.

5. Yesterday's Hippie Chicks are Today's Yuppie Sluts: Mary Jane Carpenter is **JANIE**, a 1970 classic, "so sick, so esoteric, so insane—it demands to be seen!" The plot is basic: "Flower Child" has sex with Daddy and then proceeds to tell him what she learned in school that day—Nothing! She cut classes to go hitchhiking and in the meantime engaged in a lesbian encounter and killed about a half-dozen people who offered her a ride. (Mary Jane also wrote the script.) Intense stuff!! Recommended; you have to see it to believe it!!! Where have you gone, Mary Jane Carpenter???

A Haunting Rhyme for Bedtime.





TWO LANE BLACKTOP (1971). Here's the perfect example of a cult film that wasn't. Before its U.S. release, the industry buzz said that this small drama was going to be the breakthrough hit of the year—igniting careers and expanding bank accounts much in the way *EASY RIDER* had only two years earlier. *Esquire Magazine* went so far as to print the entire screenplay in anticipation of its counterculture success. When it ultimately hit theatres, *TWO LANE* got its fair share of critical praise, and then disappeared with barely a box office ripple. Nowadays, Universal hasn't even released the damned thing on

video...The film's director, Monte Hellman, began his career with several solid B-movies and a pair of existential westerns featuring Jack Nicholson, *RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND* and *THE SHOOTING*. But it was all downhill for Monte after the financial disappointment of *BLACKTOP*—going from the rural grit of *COCKFIGHTER* to the pastaland western *CHINA 9 LIBERTY 37*, and now relegated to cookie-cutter crap like *SILENT NIGHT*, *DEADLY NIGHT 3*. But if only for this fine, meticulously-observed road movie, we see that Monte was one of America's most original directors. Hauling in two (then-popular) musicians to star in his loose tale, Dennis Wilson (of The Beach Boys) and James Taylor play The Mechanic and The Driver—a pair of disaffected professional drifters with a souped-up '55 Chevy, searching for cheap thrills and fast cash in illegit backroad racing. Though on the surface these guys seem like a pair of ordinary car addicts (intense, but virtually inarticulate unless it has to do with carburetors or oil pans), scripters Rudy Wurlitzer and Will Cory have more on their minds than

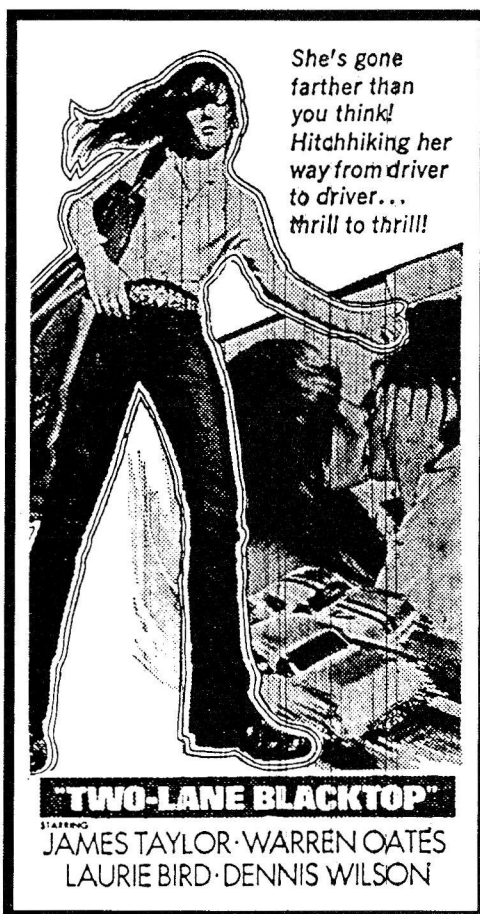
just grease-monkey slice o' life. These nameless characters represent rootless, nihilistic youth and a burnt-out generation looking for something, ANYTHING. Just so long as they don't have to look back. Along the way, the guys pick up a hippie chick (Laurie Bird) who climbs into their backseat. But it's Warren Oates who kicks the film into third gear when he pulls alongside in his '70 Pontiac GTO and steals every scene with his loose-tongued tall tales and parade of hitchhiking passengers. Soon, a cross country race is set in motion between the two cars, and the viewer gets a series of episodic non-adventures featuring these ciphers. All this is heavy going for viewers in search of kicks, so thank god for Warren Oates, who (even though his character is a pitiable jackass much of the time) brings warmth and laughs to the role. But when Oates tries to loosen up the Chevy

crew by rambling about his past, Taylor shrugs him off with a monotone "I don't wanna hear about it," preferring to return to the only language they seem fluent in: Auto shoptalk. As you can see, it's clear why the film never found an audience. Its distanced tone and cold characterizations made it inaccessible to younger audiences who were more in search of puddle-deep rebellion. And why would any arthouse addict go to a movie seemingly aimed at Car and Driver Magazine subscribers? Plus the characters are frustratingly vague, the cast consists primarily of stiff first-time actors, and the storyline

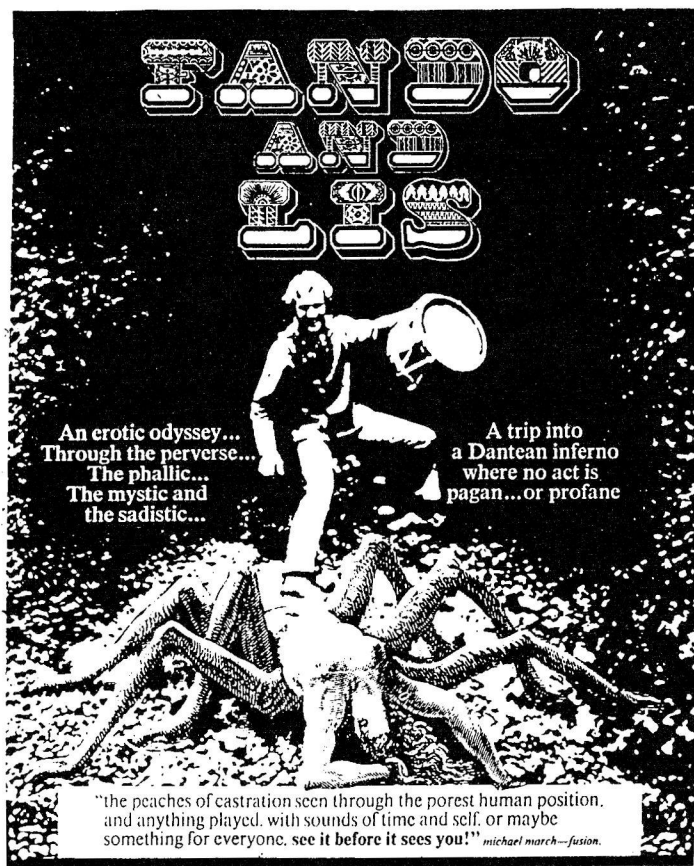
is devoid of dramatic horsepower. But under the surface, this cool, brittle ride is as rich as its rural backdrop of gas stations, diners, and dead end lives. The characters are often unfathomable and their destination uncertain, but its landscape of lost souls rings all too true. No question, this is a difficult movie, but also a rewarding one.

THUNDERCRACK! (1975). If you're at all familiar with underground cinema, than you've probably heard tales about this flick for years. But actually seeing the damned thing is a different matter entirely. Crass, sick and hilarious, this no-budget b&w feature is filled with the essence of pure, undiluted cinematic derangement. Like the earliest works of John Waters, it revels in taboo-shattering shocks and an undying love for Hollywood kitsch. Glorious overwritten by George Kuchar, and directed by the late Curt McDowell (who was one of Kuchar's first students), it's a torrent of comically-lit clichés, heated to the point of lurid parody. The time: A dark and stormy night. The setting: An old, secluded mansion—the home of the terrifically obscene Mrs. Gert Hammond (Marion Eaton), who staggers about the place with heavy, mismatched eyebrows and a vomit-caked wig. And as the night progresses, more and more visitors arrive at her doorstep, stranded by the inclement weather. One guy has a fear of ladies' girdles, another is the Christian wife of a country western singer, a few more were in a car wreck, and George Kuchar himself shows up (and steals the show) while transporting circus animals. The characters then proceed to fight, fuck and spout pages

and pages of dialogue, while Marion plays voyeur through secret peepholes—watching the males play with vacuum-powered penis enlargers as she masturbates with a huge cucumber. A smorgasbord of 42nd Street goodies are left out for the guests' disposal (the predictable array of blow-up dolls, jellies, dildos, et cetera), and they're certainly tested out thoroughly. Everyone has dark, nasty secrets. Everyone has weaknesses which are eventually exposed. And all the men have hairy asses (which we get in *WAY-too-loving* close-up). Of course, the best is yet to come, when the viewer is introduced to Marion's dead hubbie, who she had pickled in jars after he was killed by locusts; and her son, who's kept locked in the basement with Elephantitis of the balls. Plus, since the filmmakers have every other sexual combo on display, why not toss in a horny



gorilla with a taste for young men, and Kuchar's indescribably demented story of having sex with an ape?!...With a running time of over two hours, the film is certainly a task, but it never slows down and NEVER shuts up, not even for the sex scenes. Never one to waste film stock, Kuchar has the characters rambling incessantly, even in the middle of a blow job. This is a full-blown, near-perfect parody which cobbles together a cast of Irwin Allenesque characters, and then steeps them in hardcore sex and disturbing imagery, until it becomes a twisted soap opera. The performers are all appropriately hyperactive, and Kuchar (as usual) is a kinetic wonder, bringing power (and flying spittle) to every word. But the flick's true joy lies in George's gift for scriptwriting. The movie's packed with long, lush monologues, wall-to-wall revelations, plus dialogue so dense (and often drowned out by the score) that it's impossible to ingest in only one sitting. But is it erotic, you wonder? Not to the unimaginative mainstream viewer, but I certainly found something cruelly, crudely seductive in its fondness for fetish and secret pleasures. Without question, THUNDERCRACK! is one of the great underground sleaze epics, and a touchstone for all independent filmmakers to come!



FANDO AND LIS (1969). Just when I thought I'd run out of Alexandro Jodorowsky films to fawn over (including debacles like TUSK and THE RAINBOW THIEF, which I covered in SC#4), I locate a copy of his earliest feature. (Actually, the guy's first film is lost, according to all sources. Based on "The Severed Heads" by Thomas Mann, it was a fable done in mime, and even Jodorowsky doesn't have a copy.) This pre-EL TOPO, pre-midnight-movie-fame flick definitely shows what was to come from this unorthodox, inconsistent genius. Based on Fernando Arrabal's play (which Jodorowsky had previously directed on stage), the flick was castrated by its distributors, Cannon Films, after causing a fracas at the Acapulco Film Festival for being too "corrupting"...Working with no budget to speak of, and filmed on weekends, the production reeks with Bunuel influenced surrealism and pretensions. Sergio Klainer and Diana Mariscal star as the title

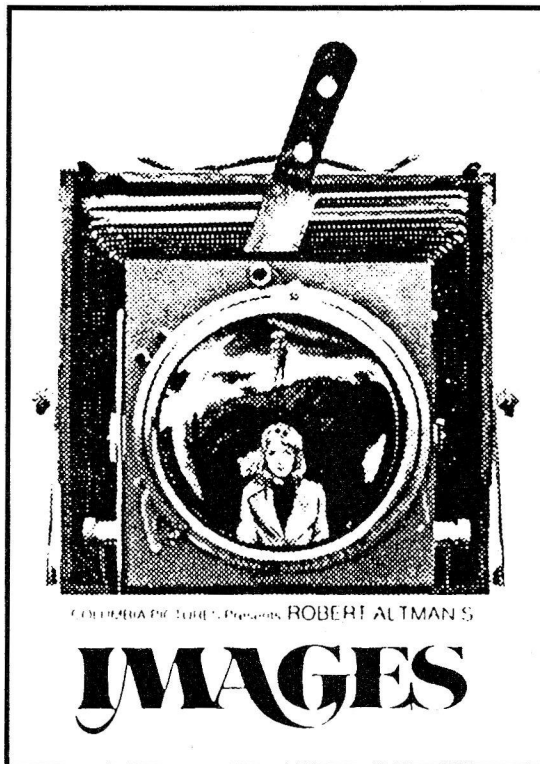
characters, a young couple in search of the enchanted city of Tar, where ecstasy can (supposedly) be found. Fando is impotent, Lis is paralyzed, and together they travel across a rocky landscape (with the bleach blonde Lis wheeled along or carried), equipped with their only possessions, a drum and an old fashioned phonograph. Basically, it's a road movie that takes these holy innocents nowhere, as they encounter bizarre characters, experience childhood flashbacks, play cruel jokes on each other, and sit on rocks, rambling banalities. They argue, they split up (Fando runs off and Lis sits there bawling), they get back together, and when Fando gets sick of her whining, he drags Lis around by the feet. Sure, there are plenty of striking images along the way (i.e. a musician sits amidst urban rubble, playing a flaming piano), but the first half of this flick is an incoherent, maddeningly edited mess that makes even Fellini's most indulgent work look coherent. It's not until Jodorowsky ups the tripped-out absurdity that the movie begins to hit you on a gut level. Such as when Fando is whipped by a bikini'd torturess and eyed by some horny transvestites, or encounters vampires drinking sniffers of blood (as an additional note, Jodorowsky said that all on-screen blood was real). And what other director would keep a straight face while live pigs are being pulled from Lis' vagina? (Yeah, you read that correctly.) Or when supporting characters crawl into their own graves to perish, politely thanking the grave digger as he covers 'em up? But if Jodorowsky wanted the title characters to be enchanting kids, fouled by society's ills, he failed. Because though his vision is charmingly morbid and scattered with unintentional laughs, the leads are dead weight. Along the way, I realized I didn't care about either of 'em or their heavyhanded quest. It's dense going for Jodorowsky amateurs, yet a field day for fans of murky, symbolic baloney.

NIGHT MUST FALL (1964). On the surface, it seems like an odd combination. A ruthless-psycho-on-the-prowl flick starring a young Albert Finney (fresh off of TOM JONES) and directed by hotshot Karel Reisz (who would go onto critical hits like ISADORA, MORGAN and—one of my faves—WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN?). Where the pair's first teaming, SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING, delved heavily into the Angry Young Man school of filmmaking, this unique outing twists British Kitchen Sink melodrama (which was all the rage back then) on its ass by tossing a suave psychopath into the story. It begins on a typical day, in a typical English countryside. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping, and Albert Finney is taking whacks at his latest young victim with a hand axe. As the murderous Danny, Finney chews the scenery with style. And equipped with a Welsh accent and a superbly sick sense of humor, he uses his charms to get a job nearby as a handyman—gaining the confidence of a wheelchair'd old woman, while gaining access to several young ladies' panties. The guy even gets the police on his side with his wide, acidic grin. This all makes for a strange, unsettling marriage of styles. All the supporting characters are your standard British working class boors, with the naturalistic acting you'd expect from a '60s drama. But then there's Finney, who leaves subtlety at the door and runs the gamut of in-your-face emotions. Whether he's prowling about his claustrophobic attic bedroom, scrapping his fingernails along the wallpaper, or doting on a mysterious head, er, hat box he keeps hidden away, you can tell Finney (who also co-produced) is relishing the opportunity to play a vicious, amoral killer. Whenever the pacing lags (and in this case, it's far too often), Finney pulls it back together for maximum suspense. Along the way, Reisz takes a few cues from his lead, because as Danny gets progressively more paranoid and nutty, the editing kicks in some jolting jump cuts and bizarre segues. Additional credit also goes to Hammer studio-vet Freddie Francis for his stark, crisp b&w photography. Even if Finney gets a little out of hand at the end with his PSY 101 interpretation, he holds the movie together with his creepy pivotal performance. Without him, the film would be nothing more than a well-made, but uninspired thriller.

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH (1992). Japan's "Sacred Monster" is BACK! This is the Ultimate Dinosaur's eighteenth outing, and it's a blast! And check this out: Toho Studios has even resurrected one of the Big G.'s most formidable foes, Ghidrah! (First seen in the fucking classic GHIDRAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER, and last seen in the not-so-classic GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND). The video I have is letterboxed, the rectangular widescreen image simply reduced to fit on yer TV screen, so you can enjoy the full scope of the terrific monster-wrestling scenes (the closest we'll probably ever get to actually seeing this item in a movie theater here in the states!), and instead of the usual English voice-dubbing we're used to when watching a Godzilla flick, this tape is still in its original Japanese, but with subtitled dialogue! Here's the deal: Time travelers from the future arrive in the present, supposedly to save Japan from an impending Godzilla holocaust. They've brought with them a few "adorable" little genetically-engineered pets called Dorats, which look like cats crossed with bats (gotta cash in on that cutesy-critter craze that GREMLINS started!). I groaned when I first saw these huggable li'l tykes, never suspecting the important plot device they actually were, but we'll get to that in a minute. Come with us back to the forties, just before one o' them there H-bomb tests. America and Japan are at war. On a small island in the Pacific, a small group of Japanese soldiers is hiding from a larger party of Americans who have some serious Jap-killing in mind. Suddenly, out of the woods stomps a Tyrannosaurus. The American soldiers naturally panic and shoot the dinosaur fulla bullets, but before it collapses in a bloody

THE DELINQUENTS (1957). Long before director Robert Altman became the darling of the critics with pics like M*A*S*H, NASHVILLE and THE PLAYER, he was just another schmuck filmmaker hacking out drive-in slop. And for this, his first feature, he embraced one of the most popular schlock genres of the '50s—the juvenile delinquent melodrama! On the surface, it's just another teen rebel flick, but Altman cranks up the moralistic storyline with lotsa cool jazz and kickass realism thanks to his authentic Kansas City, Missouri locales. Plus, in the starring role of the angst-filled, clean-cut, teen-gone-bad, we've got brooding Billy Jack himself, Tom Laughlin, in one of his first screen credits—and even back then, the guy was entrenched in his so-low-key-he's-nearly-catatonic mannerisms. Bookended by a hastily tacked-on narration (informing the viewer about the importance of "church groups"—go tell that to Father Ritter's kids!), Laughlin plays Scotty, a troubled teen who's pushed into a life of cheap thrills and hot babes. His folks are uptight and his girlfriend dumps him, so he promptly links up with convertible full of that dirtwater town's j.d.'s. These "kids" (played by actors in their mid-twenties) are just low-grade punks, and their idea of kicks is to break into a house, throw a party, swig back a few under-age beers, and reek attitude. But when these goons get the notion Scotty snitched on 'em to the cops, they frame the guy for a gas station robbery and kidnap his sweetie. Damn right, it's a hoary ol' storyline (punctuated by a brief, but surprisingly vicious brawl), but Peter Miller makes a great head slimeball, and slope-nosed Dick Bakalyan begins his future typecasting as the weaselly sidekick. Altman squeezes the most out of his

paltry 60 grand budget and gets maximum mileage out of the stark K.C. night-time locales (such as actual rinky-dink drive-ins, gas stations, parks). Along with the classic THE COOL AND THE CRAZY, this is one of best of that era.



IMAGES (1972). It's a shame that many of Robert Altman's best films aren't available on video. CALIFORNIA SPLIT, THIEVES LIKE US and THREE WOMEN are all somewhere in limbo, as is this very unconventional work—a psychodrama in the REPULSION mode, in which we spend 90 minutes watching a young woman falling to pieces. Susannah York stars and holds the screen in one of her finest performances, as a writer of children's books who may or may not be going slowly mad. She receives obtuse, chilling phone calls—sometimes breaking into the middle of other calls. She kisses her hubbie, and when she opens her eyes, he's changed into an intruder. And her hallucinations just keep progressing, until she even sees a doppelganger spying on her from the horizon. Being isolated in her Irish country cottage doesn't help

away is replaced by a human operator, seated inside Ghidrah's chest (shades of the original Japanese TRANSFORMERS, which was Americanized in typically lame-o fashion, but that's another story). Which monster will win the final battle for the fate of the earth?! Dynamite state-of-the-art special effects! Two very pissed-off giant monsters! A terrific music score by the great Akira Ifukube! A mean-tempered Terminator-type android from the future! (Oh, did I forget to mention him?) Expensive pyrotechnics and lotsa big stuff going BOOM! A twelve-pack and a few big fat joints, and you're all set, sonny! Definitely worth checking out a few times. I'm right. —**Brian J. Edwards**

matters either, as you can guess. And Altman pulls off this potentially dry material with surprising panache, as sexual frustrations collide headfirst with reality. Through her nightmarish episodes, York's past is methodically pieced together (not unlike the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle she's working on...Hey, I never said Altman was a subtle director, did I?), from marital infidelities to the longings for a child. Visitors come and go (including Altman regular Rene Auberjonois as her button-down hubbie), as York reads bits from the insipid fairy tale she's in the middle of writing (the only part of the film that had me cringing). And the oblique ending is sure to leave the viewer as confused as York's basketcase...On a purely technical level, the film

is impeccable. Vilmos Zsigmond's cinematography gives the film a rich glow and breathtakingly captures the wee hills of Ireland. And John Williams' moody score (aided by Stomu Yamashta's "sounds") proves that the guy once had a lick of talent, before he began cranking out assembly line scores for Spielberg and his clones. Altogether different from Altman's usual work, since instead of an ensemble, he focuses in on one character, and does so without his typical wise-assed edge. It's a marvelous piece of cine-madness, with York in the role of her career. She appears in virtually every scene and dominates them all, with her sexy, confused and likable persona. Sure, when it comes to thrills, you'll do better with the Home Shopping Network, but even though nothing much ever happens on screen, Altman makes it a pretentious, yet compelling experience.

TETSUO 2: BODY HAMMER (1992). Once again, wunderkind techno-gore director/writer/cinematographer/art director (did he do the catering too?) Shinya Tsukamoto takes his audience into the realm of the fantastic, disgusting and disturbing, in this follow-up to his unforgettable debut, TETSUO. With a larger budget on hand, he expands his perspectives and reaches the same heights of cyber-weirdness. But unfortunately, Shinya never plumbs the previous pic's depths, and thereby loses the savage intimacy which made the first a '90s answer to ERASERHEAD. We're still given the tale of one man and his madness, but the viewpoint has been turned outward in order to reach a larger audience, with the tale taking the format of a paranoid SF/thriller. Tomorah Taguchi stars as a family man (complete with adorable wife & kids) who's chased by ominous strangers and afflicted with strange nightmares (though the greased, bald muscle men in the foundry milieu initially reminded me of a Madonna video). When his body suddenly begins mutating into biomechanical creations of destruction, he's taken hostage by a sinister corporation, whose cackling doctors (aided by those stupid chrome-domed body-builders) perform mind and body experiments on the guy. Every so often, Taguchi's arm turns into a gun, or a fleshy looking bazooka grows from his chest, and when he escapes, the obligatory army of bad guys come after him, with firearms mutating from their bodies too. The gloomy retro-future sets are simply leaky basements, characters pretentiously mumble some nonsense about being gods, while the editor splices in some rapid fire dream sequences accompanied by a pop score. By the end, our hero turns super-hero, evolving into an armour-plated juggernaut in search of his kidnapped missus, with warped warriors battling it out for domination...Sounds silly? Yeah, sorta. Where the first film was dark and terrifying, this one goes for colorful flashiness. Less experimental in nature, and more concerned with narrative,



Every
man who
sees her
digs her...
but she
digs kicks
of a very
special
kind!

ANN-MARGRET
JOHN FORSYTHE
"Kitten
with a Whip"

it's like watching Oriental MTV while on bad acid. Admittedly, there are several absolutely jaw-dropping sequences laced throughout (especially the pixilated ones), and the ending is a pisser. But it never drags the viewer into this demonic world, while attempting to explain what was left acceptably nebulous in the first. And though I was still wholeheartedly impressed by Shinya's imaginative surrealism, it's nothing we hadn't seen better utilized in Part One. There's a wild beauty to the violence and dementia pouring from the brain of Tsukamoto, but it's been tamed a bit too much for my tastes. It left me cold. A disappointment for fans of the first, but still well worth catching in order to observe one of the boldest new filmmakers of the '90s.

KITTEN WITH A WHIP (1964). On the heels of her show-stopping numbers with Elvis in VIVA LAS VEGAS, Ann-Margret decided to take the low road with this no-budget, b&w melodrama. A surprisingly sleazy juvenile delinquent flick, with a killer performance from everyone's favorite sex kitten. John Forsythe stars as a suave, fat cat politician, whose palatial house is 'borrowed' by a bleach blonde cutie named Jody (Ann-M), dressed in nothing but a nightgown. Not unlike Goldilocks, Forsythe discovers Jody napping in his bed, and the guy is mildly intrigued by this disheveled dish with the crazy curves. And (since his wife is conveniently away) Forsythe's sympathy goes out to the teen when she tells him she's run away from an abusive home. But he quickly learns that Jody's not your ordinary runaway jailbait with abundant cleavage. She's on the run from the cops, after breaking out of a detention home, setting fire to the place and stabbing a guard. And pretty soon the tables are turned, with Ann-M playing mindgames on the increasingly nervous dweeb and threatening Forsythe with rape charges. A few thrill-crazy (though unbelievably clean cut) hoods join the party and provide a smidgen of bloodshed, but Ann (as well as the viewer) quickly gets bored with their cretinous hijinx, and she eventually dumps the punks and takes Forsythe on a Mexican joy ride...Lemme tell you, this flick is without a doubt the finest showcase of Ann-Margret's talents. She's a tough, no-nonsense bitch, using sex 'n' a smile to get what she wants, and this harder edge makes her more alluring than ever. When she snarls and brandishes the broken end of a whiskey bottle—well, I think I'm in love. Plus, Forsythe is such a cardboard clod, overflowing with morality, that you can't help but enjoy watching her make him squirm. Douglas Heyes' direction is cheap but energetic, complete with an endless supply of hip dialogue and a no-compromise finale that had me cheering. KITTEN is a much-loved, vicious li'l B-movie with Ann-Margret proving once and for all that she's a slut goddess extraordinaire.

MAN BITES DOG [C'est Arrive Pres De Chez Vous] (1992). It's unfortunate that the only exposure this film has received in N.Y.C. was during its two day stint at last year's New York Film Festival, because it deserves a better fate than simply being screened for a few hundred decrepit, blue-haired patrons and film school geeks. It's a one-concept-wonder, written, directed and starring a trio of Belgian first-timers (Benoit Poelvoorde, Remy Belvaux, Andre Bonzel). Taking the concept of cinema verite filmmaking to its darkest extremes, a documentary crew matter-of-factly sets out to capture the day-to-day activities of serial killer Ben (Benoit). They follow him on his daily routine, as he starts off his morning by kicking a postman to death. And right off the bat, Ben tries to enlist the film crew into assisting him in hiding the corpses, but they refrain because they want to stay objective. Ben slowly ingratiates himself with the crew though, and after killing an old woman, he shares the loot with the filmmakers because he knows that they're on a "shoestring budget". The pitch black humor slices even deeper when, before snapping a victim's neck, Ben lets the sound man press his mike to the guy's spine, so they'll get a good loud "crack!" on tape. And without question, the grimmest sequence is when the entire bunch gets drunk on Xmas, invades a couple's home, and gang rapes the wife while taking turns behind the camera. Believe it or not, none of this is as sick and perverted as it could've been, since this wicked comedy is also filled with social satire and journalistic skewering. It's an insidiously wicked concept, and whenever the sledgehammer Belgian satire begins to get longwinded or obvious, the trio suddenly comes up with an episode that'll have your jaw dropping, such as (in the funniest plot twist) when Ben and the crew accidentally run into another local mass murderer, who has his OWN camera crew. On the technical side, the evocative black and white photography turns the cityscape into a lawless, nihilistic maze of burnt-out buildings and reservoirs filled with dead bodies. And Benoit is perfect in the lead, making our cold-blooded killer into a living, breathing, and (most of all) annoying character. When he isn't shooting an innocent citizen point blank, Ben is a pompous jerk, who attempts to show his humane side by spouting terrible poetry or introducing us to his unsuspecting, loving family (in a brilliant move, Ben's parents are played by the actor's ACTUAL folks, who were told they were being filmed for a documentary about their son...I bet they were mighty surprised when they saw the final film). An inconsistent, yet uniquely disturbing debut, that often brought to mind HENRY, PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER meets BELGIUM'S FUNNIEST HOME VIDEOS. And which, in between the violent escapades, manages to say a lot about the responsibility and integrity of the mass media, and the seductive allure of bloodshed.

DRACULA A.D. 1972 (1972). Everyone seems to dump on this movie. When first released, critics said it was by far the weakest of Hammer's Chris Lee/Dracula series, since it tossed everyone's favorite bloodsucker headfirst into modern-day London and the flower-power, free-love generation. But nowadays I think it's an unintentional laff riot. Hell, I was getting tired of all those recycled period costumes and gloomy, cobwebbed castles anyhow. Chris Lee and Peter Cushing are still onboard, despite the change in centuries, and though each seems perplexed, they barrel through

the flick keeping a straight-face (even if the viewer is unable to). Director Alan Gibson (who doesn't have a clue) then sprinkles in a supporting cast of young, thoroughly incompetent actors; wall-to-wall groovy dialogue; hippie threads galore (big floppy hats, bell bottoms, guru dashikis, et cetera); a couple tunes by musical never-wuzes Stoneground; and an annoyingly cranked pop score which makes it sound like an episode of THE MOD SQUAD...It all begins with a bunch of hippies looking for "way way out" kicks, led by suave Johnny Alucard (subtle, eh?). They set up a groovy Black Mass in the cemetery for a giggle, and after some long-winded bellowing, end up resurrecting Dracula, who's been napping for the last 100+ years. As the Count, Lee is as formidable as ever and gives the film what little class it has. He wanders onto the set, gnaws messily on a throat or two, and goes back to his trailer for tea, while the youngsters continue with their methadone acting. But where does Peter Cushing come in, you ask? Well, just by coincidence, the grandfather of one of the young lasses (Stephanie Beacham) is a direct descendant of the original Professor Van Helsing! And soon the crotchety Cushing is aiding the cops in their murder investigation. The police think they've got a Manson-esque cult on the loose, but Cushing and his granddaughter—the aging fart and the busty tart—know better...It's all tacky, stoopid and inexplicably entertaining. And even when the hippie histrionics wear out their welcome, Lee keeps us amused with his sanguinary snacking. Plus, in an all-too-brief, early screen appearance, Caroline Munro is a knockout as the thrill-seeking sexpot of the bunch—with cleavage to kill for and a smile like sweet acid, she's eroticism personified. So even if the entire film's a mess, how can anyone NOT be amused by long-haired hippie vampires, low-cut young lasses, and a pair of horror film vets who could play these roles in their sleep (and might've, come to think of it)?

SUGAR COOKIES (1973). This exceptionally lurid tale snagged an X-rating when first released, with its credits boasting a bizarre combination of celluloid bedfellows. The cast includes ex-Warhol regulars Ondine, Monique Van Vooren and Mary Woronov; the executive producer and co-scripter was a pre-Troma Team Lloyd Kaufman; and one of the associate producers was none other than future Oscar-winner Oliver Stone (the two other associate producers went on to help Stone with his feature debut, SEIZURE). Gee, I bet self-righteous Oliver doesn't put this piece of trash on his resume

anymore...Right off the bat I knew this was going to be an exceptional chunk of exploitation when the first credit read "Theodore Gershuny's SUGAR COOKIES". It's pretentious enough when a REAL director tosses his name above the title of some multi-million dollar epic, but when it happens with slop like this, it's downright ridiculous! George Shannon stars as Max, a shifty porno filmmaker who enjoys playing sex 'n' death games with a bevy of vapid babes, who all fall for his fourth-rate gigolo routine. But Max goes a little too far one day when (during a surge of "creativity") he shoots one gal in the mouth and blames it on suicide. Que sara sara. Meanwhile, we're shown clips of Max's films (softcore, soft-focus shtupping in the middle of a cow pasture); meet his associate, Camilla (Woronov), who heads up a riotous casting call for new additions to Max's stable; and cringe at the 'humorous' subplot con-



cerning Max's fat nephew, who enjoys wearing lady's lingerie. Things really heat up when Lynn Lowry (THEY CAME FROM WITHIN) enters as Max's latest find, and Woronov and her sneak off for a steamy lesbian tryst. Then there are the scurvy cops—repellant fuckheads who'll go so low as to sniff a murdered girl's dirty panties and laugh about it. And by the end, the movie swings into full-blown psycho-sexual melodrama. Admittedly, not many U.S. films are so willing to wallow in perverse sexual fantasies and the world of pornography, and although SUGAR COOKIES is by no means a good film, it's so sadistically erotic at times that it keeps you watching—sorta like a traffic fatality. For most viewers though, it's merely an excuse to watch the femme cast gratuitously strutting around buck naked, including Woronov, who lays around on a shag rug, doing nude exercises. She's the only true talent in the bunch too, playing a hardcore bitch while bringing a cool sense of humor to this nonsense. It's obvious that director Gershuny had more on his shriveled little mind than pandering to the nut-ton-flogging contingent; plus his mock-artsy veneer, sick plot twists, and tacky, erotic art direction all combine to make a strangely compelling mis-asma. So dark at its core that it would make a fine double bill with Paul Bartel's PRIVATE PARTS, and so downright tawdry that it takes on an outrageously camp edge.

ANOTHER GIRL, ANOTHER PLANET (1992).

Michael Almereyda, the director of cult fave TWISTER, isn't just lounging around in between feature projects, as observed by this excellent, hour-long work. Lensed in his own apartment using a \$45 Fisher-Price "Pixelvision" video camera, and then transferred to 16mm, the result is to say the least visually original, though a little difficult on the eyes, with every image distilled into a black-and-white cubist vision. But what it loses in detail, it gains in dreamlike quality, the images taking on the texture of some softly etched memory. This seemingly autobiographical tale focuses on a small circle of friends and lovers, as relationships sprout and die, and anxieties flourish. Barry Sherman stars as Bill and Nic Ratner is his neighbor/best friend, who spend their days sitting around Bill's apartment, drinking and rambling, and somehow managing to invite over some gorgeous young women. Nic sits around wisecracking as Bill makes out with all these lovely ladies, yet still the guy's inexplicably melancholy, saying "I wasn't used to being happy. It was somehow...exhausting". Gee, I wish we all had such devastating problems. Sherman is fine in the pivotal role, but it's Nic who gets the best lines (in fact, he wrote most of his own dialogue), the best wardrobe, and the biggest laughs, right down to the simple act of combing his hair with a fork. On the distaff side, Isabel Gillies (METROPOLITAN) and Elina Lowensohn (SIMPLE MEN) are standouts as two of Barry's girlfriends. Both actresses are totally refreshing, and as one is dumped for the other, Isabel even gets the opportunity to go from sweetie to psycho—pounding on Bill's door and howling in the middle of the night. The film is also packed with wonderfully off-kilter moments, such as one reoccurring episode of how Bill watches the same Max Fleischer cartoon ("Dancing on the Moon") with every new woman entering his life. And Almereyda eloquently captures the charms and the chaos of falling in love, reaching the viewer with a simple glance or a sudden, touching song.

Sure, there's no real beginning. No real end. Just another slice of lost love from the files of the East Village. And though some viewers will undoubtedly be turned off by the pic's experimental technique, this impeccably acted, humorous and lyrical story is well worth a look. It's one of the best independent productions of the year.

MANTIS IN LACE (1968). How could anyone NOT fall in love with this kooky, counterculture blast? It's a schlocky, low-budget fave loaded with goofy violence, a bit of skin, and a 'horrifying' look at the evil effects of hallucinogenic drugs! In other words, it's a four-star laugh riot! Sexy Susan Stewart stars as Lila, an exotic dancer at a low-rent night spot, and one night, after shaking her lungwarts for the middle-aged slobs, she invites one of the guys back to her pad. "I'll take you on a trip you'll never want to come down from," she's promised by the pick-up, and soon this naive, mini-skirted airhead is

scrambled by "the stuff that dreams are made of"! The Devil's Sugarcube! L.S.D.! And the fun really begins when cinematographer Leslie Kovacks (a.k.a. Laszlo Kovacs) tests out some of the trippy camera skills he would refine the following year in EASY RIDER, including spinning lights and colorful images sprayed across human faces. At first, Lila strips down to her lingerie and grooves on the acid, but before we know it, the chick's freakin' out, man! So badly that she repeatedly stabs her date with a screwdriver while in mid-coitus, chops him up with a meat cleaver, stuffs the portable chunks into a cardboard crate, and leaves it in the middle of a field. Now THAT'S a bad trip! The next morning, Lila's back to normal—bouncing about on stage in her white go-go boots and unable to remember a damned thing. But as anyone who's taken L.S.D. knows, even one little trip can lead to instant addiction and uncontrollable flashbacks (yeah, right). So whenever Lila takes a

lecherous gent back to her warehouse love nest for a bonedance, she doses up, hallucinates about hypodermics, surgeons and bananas, and then kills the guy. Meanwhile, the crew cut cops are checking out the town's "psychedelic shops", with the cops actually gunning down an innocent man (just like they do in real life). Director William Rotsler (LIKE IT IS) keeps the pace swift, but he's hapless when it comes to amateur actors and cornball dialogue. The pic's primarily success is due to Kovacs' frantic, experimental visuals, which turn it into a cut-rate version of THE TRIP. Plus, in the lead, Ms. Stewart is so wonderfully psychotic when she flips out that she reminded me of a few of my ex-girlfriends. Co-starring Stuart Lancaster (FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!), typecast as an old fart, and the incessant theme song, "Lila", sung by Lynn Harper.

THE APPLE (1980). I can't imagine a more brain-damaging "musical" (I use the term loosely) than this futuristic disco fantasy from money-shovelling Israeli merde-meisters Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus. Concocted by hack filmmakers (or should I say, skagbag businessmen?) who were weaned on the worst of Vegas pop culture from the moment they staggered outta their kibbutz, the result is a combination of CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC meets LOGAN'S RUN. And it's fucking hilarious!...The story revolves around the World Vision Song Festival in the ultra-futuristic year 1994, where the new

SHE LOVED THEM...

and loved them
and loved them
**TO
DEATH!**



**MANTIS
"LACE"**

dance craze The Bim (which consists of sticking a sparkly, gov't-regulated triangle on your forehead, then gyrating to generic muzak) is taking the moronic population of America by storm. Meanwhile, the villainous, gouted Mr. Boogalow (Vladek Shaybal) sets his power-hungry sights on a pair of squeaky-clean folk singers who warble third-rate Manilow-inspired sewage. And a few innocent "little pills" later, the sweet young girl (Catherine Mary Stewart) signs away her life and career, against her boyfriend's better judgment. What follows is your typical Faust-type fable, enlivened by overwrought, jaw-dropping musical numbers. There's a Dante's Inferno-styled bit entitled "Taste the Apple", featuring Boogalow as Satan, and backed up by so many fay young men you'd think it was a Morrissey concert. Or how about the psychedelic disco sex scene, when Mr. Wonder Bread gets dosed and watches the rest of the cast writhing through a kaleidoscope? But by far, the best is the Bim Exercise Hour, when the entire city shuts down to dance (badly) in the streets—bikers, nuns, even doctors and the patients on the operating table! But it gets **EVER WORSE!** Because the last-minute heroes turn out to be a commune of futuristic hippies, whose idealism, love, and GODSPELL-influenced fashion sense save the day. Not to mention God himself showing up in a heavenly limo (I kid you not!)...This horseshit is packed with horrendous music by George Clinton, costumes so godawful gaudy that it makes Deee-Lite look like bankers, and more money spent on eye make-up than on a script. The choreography is reminiscent of brain tumor seizures, the sets look like a third-world shopping mall, and the entire project has that undeniable stench of chintzy, foreign-lensed tripe. On the (barely) plus side, the wide-eyed Ms. Stewart is the only highlight, playing the head dish everyone wants a piece of. Plus, I sorta appreciated the flick's anti-American corporation sentiment. On the whole though, everything here is fake, puddle-deep and flaccid. The **ROCKY WHORER** of the Gaza Strip, which was (thank god) barely released on this side of the Atlantic.

GUTS OF A VIRGIN [Shojo No Hara-wata] (1984). One of the sexiest, goriest, totally whacked films in this entire magazine! A prime example of Japanese "splatter-eros", directed by Gaira with an emphasis on the explicit. And even though it was a little difficult to follow the unsubtitled

storyline at first, the shocking visuals will undoubtedly keep your eyes glued to the screen. The storyline is basically just a **FRIDAY THE 13th**-style 'bunch-of-friends-isolated-from-the-rest-of-the-world-and-menaced-by-a-killer-whatzit' romp, but adrenalized with plenty of subversive sexuality and startling technique behind the camera. It begins with a vanload of male fashion photographers and their sexy, young models travelling late at night, after a steamy bikini photo session. They end up at a deserted house in the middle of nowhere, indulge in some kinky proceedings (love that nearly-nude co-ed wrestling match!), but fail to notice that there's a psychotic madman with a foot long erection lurking in the woods. The moment one of them leaves the group and wanders off alone, he's yesterday's lunch, and the twisted, ultra-graphic level of violence makes your normal splatter flick look like Sesame Street. For example, a guy gets a sledgehammer bashed to his skull, and the filmmakers slap the audience with a rapid-fire montage just before the moment of impact (the hammer swings, a centipede crawls through the grass, a chunk

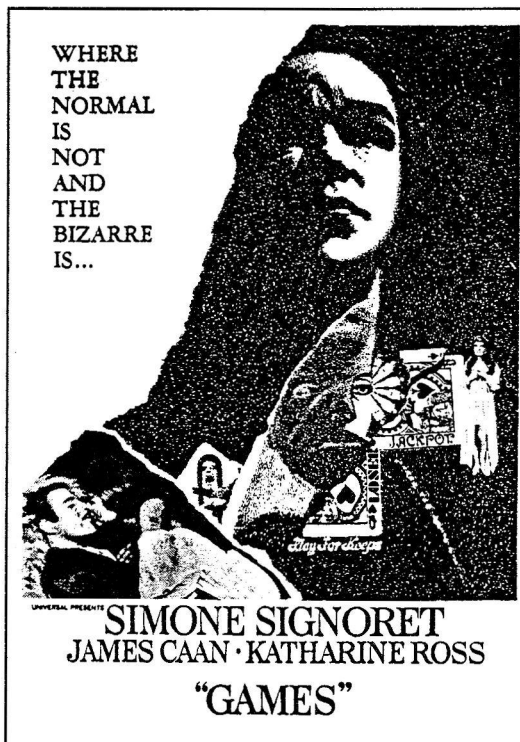
of raw meat is pounded on a butcher board, a geyser of water gushes into the camera, and finally, the skull is crushed, with both eyeballs popping out of their sockets, **IN CLOSE UP!**) Pretentious? Sure. Effective? Definitely! Eventually, one of the women goes bonkers, walking around nude while lugging about a disembodied head and masturbating with a dismembered arm. Then she has intercourse with this evil demon, who squirts about a quart of semen and fist fucks the gal—ripping out her intestines in the process. Whew! And would you believe it's even more startling and disturbing than I could possibly make it sound? Drenched in mood and brimming with gore-rotica, the film goes about as far, sexually, as the Japanese are allowed to in their country (i.e. no genitalia or penetration). Odd though, that they can't even show pubic hair, but it's cum-doke to have a woman choking and spitting out a mouthful of cum after an energetic 69. Alternately campy, sick and spectacular. I loved it!

GAMES (1967). Curtis Harrington is one of the most underappreciated horror/suspense directors of the '60s, and his work carried a unique combination of intelligence and sly humor, as witnessed by **NIGHT TIDE**, **WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?**, and this calculating, psychological chiller. It's sad that his career never took off, while

hacks became the darlings of the studio system...Set almost entirely within the confines of an Upper East Side home, James Caan and Katherine Ross play a hip, married couple with a fondness for games and deceptions on a grande scale. One day Simone Signoret shows up at their doorstep selling cosmetics, and when she faints in the middle of her spiel, the middle-aged woman suddenly becomes a house guest at their trendy brownstone. Though the beginning looks and feels suspiciously like a made-for-TV movie, the duplicitous plot bubbles with creepy, subversive twists as Simone ingratiates herself into their hearts, while playing her own mindgames on the couple—which they gleefully escalate. We get faked seductions, suicides, and more, until one of their increasingly perverse games backfires and reality comes crashing down on them. Harrington builds the suspense superbly and fills the corners with black-tongued humor, such as when Caan coats a corpse in plaster and turns it into a work of art (a homage to Corman's **BUCKET OF BLOOD?**). Unfortunately, the lead

actors are a stiff lot, as if they were unsure about having signed on to play a trio of cruel, sadistic and disturbed individuals who are having a ball being bastards to each other. But character actor fave Don Stroud gets a few bizarre moments as a brutish (big surprise) delivery boy. Despite moments of hokiness and unbelievability (for instance, you keep wondering why the hell Caan and Ross never do the obvious thing—kick the old bag out on her ass), this is an amusingly amoral thriller where nothing is what it seems, and as many games are played on the viewer as on the cast.

MODESTY BLAISE (1966). In the wake of the James Bond phenomenon, arthouse director Joseph Losey concocted this colorful secret agent saga, based on the comic by Peter O'Donnell and Jim Holdaway. Needless to add, the film was virtually ignored by moviegoers around the world. Their loss, methinks. Leaving all subtlety at the front door, Losey gives us groovy '60s music, mod locales, a wealth of acting talent, and a distaff Derek Flint in a black, skin-tight



jumpsuit. It all comes together into a high camp cocktail. A pop-art blast of spy spoofery, with a tilt-a-whirl camera technique and such kitschy rhythms, that it comes off like *THE AVENGERS* as directed by Fellini. Euro-dish Monica Vitti (in her first English-speaking role) stars as our sexy, resourceful heroine, who charms her way into any dangerous situation, and Terence Stamp (*SPIRITS OF THE DEAD*) is her gigolo partner, Willie Garvin. But the acting honors go to Dirk Bogarde, who's a howl as the fay arch villain of the piece, Mr. Gabriel, complete with albino wig and ultra-hip sunglasses. But how can you hate any bad guy whose idea of fun is watching a bikini'd young lass strangling a mime? The storyline is so coated in tongue-in-cheek episodes, characters leaping into each other's bed, or from country to country, that you sometimes lose track of the MacGuffin (a shipment of diamonds Modesty is supposed to guard for an Arab potentate). The cast of gorgeous, bored Euro-trash hits the perfect mood, as if they were all stoned on good Turkish hash, and Blaise and Garvin seem more like a pair of drunken partygoers than secret agents, with the duo even breaking into song in the middle of the explosive finale (shades of *HUDSON HAWK!*). Losey doesn't have a clue about shooting a competent action film, and his cold style keeps the tale from having any emotional resonance, but this is a case where style (plus a subversively cynical edge) supersedes substance. A screwball spy stroganoff, with a script that must've taken a full lunchtime to concoct, in between martinis on the back of a cocktail napkin.

EVEN HITLER HAD A GIRLFRIEND (1991). A couple years back, director Ronnie Cramer and his Colorado-based Scorched Earth Productions released his first feature, *BACKSTREET JANE* [SC#3]—an interesting little modern noir featuring good performances and atmosphere. It was a breath of fresh air in comparison to most low-budgeters, which wallow in cheapjack sex and slapdash schlock. Well, I guess *JANE* wasn't as profitable as he'd hoped, because this, his second feature, is nothing but a loosely basted crock of (you guessed it) cheapjack sex and slapdash schlock. Sure, if all the viewer wants is a string of naked, stacked strumpets, this certainly fills the bill for the bishop-whackin' contingent. But I'll take *The Robin Byrd Show* over this slop anyday...Andren Scott stars as a fat, middle-aged security guard who spends his free time sitting around his pathetic excuse for an apartment and wasting his pathetic excuse for a life by watching cable TV smut in his undershorts. He's a whiny, sorry-assed lump, with no friends, no love life, no social skills, and no sympathy from the viewer. This shitheel is such a barrel of laughs that you wanna slap the guy around for about, say, a couple weeks, and though Cramer obviously envisioned this bloated fuck as sort of a chubby Woody Allenesque creation (what with his romantically-obsessed, paranoid monologues), instead he's simply unlikable. Whether he's annoying sunbathing chicks at poolside with somnambulist pick-up lines, or resorting to phone sex and prostitution, the guy has all the charisma of prostate cancer. And this guy is such a limp dick that after shelling out for a whore, he tape records the wham-bam, so he can listen to it over and over and become (difficult to believe) even more dull and pathetic than at the beginning. On the plus side, the film gets barely amusing when he watches a sci-fi flick



about a disembodied brain and the woman in love with it, and suddenly realizes that everyone and everyTHING seems to have a girlfriend but him. And though the parade of lovely young ladies and will surely test the limitations of any guy's freeze-frame button, the camera always cuts back to this dweeb. But I do have to give the pic BIG points for its sudden, grim finale! At least they got ONE thing right!...There you have it. A great title, a lousy film, and some fabulous puontang. The only reason I can imagine for this movie ever being made is the fact Ronnie probably got a lot of pussy during the shoot. I guess that's a better reason than most.

EXQUISITE CORPSES (1988). If there's one type of movie I loathe beyond all others, it's quirky, cutting edge comedies set in New York City. A few (rare) films have been able to cut through the Boho bullshit and give viewers a unique perspective on the area, but most simply cobble together some forced humor, dim characters, and a director who obviously laughs far too much at his own trendy in-jokes. This film is a perfect example of the later, and (the still justifiably unknown) writer/director Temistocles Lopez is to blame. Talent-barren Gary Knox (who also composed the stultifying score) stars as Timothy, a Texas-bred hick who moves to Lower Manhattan to make it as a trombone player. But this cowboy-hat-'n'-fringed-jacket moron is quickly taken for all his cash by con men, hassled by the law, mugged, et cetera (in other words, hit by every stereotyped situation a lame scriptwriter could dish out). And after dealing with poverty, homelessness and frostbite, Timothy is finally rescued by a queer sugar daddy, who trains him in N.Y.C. attitude and turns the idiot into a Euro-trash cabaret sensation (which is difficult to swallow, since he's such an on-stage abomination—fitted with all the charisma of a roadkill and unable to carry a tune with a shovel). I was sick of this pic after barely half an hour, and at the film's nadir, when Timothy encounters the lovable ol' baglady with a cute dog, I suddenly had the urge to track down director Lopez and kick his saccharine-laced ass back to wherever he came from. It's utterly pointless garbage which, despite some glimpses of low-budget style, is without any heart. A tour of Lower Manhattan's blandest subversives, as seen through the glazed eyes of this unlikable outsider. And by the time a murder occurs, you've already jumped ship...Amongst the confused supporting cast, Zoe Lund (MS. 45) pops up as a mysterious prostitute. And T&A schlockstress Ruth Collins (*DOOM ASYLUM*) plays Tim's ex-girlfriend. At least the title fits the characters—they're all so hip and gorgeous (or, at least, are supposed to be), yet dead above the neck. Crammed with limp comedy and banal dramatics, this might be stylish and salacious if you're sitting on a stump in the middle of Missouri, but to anyone with a triple digit I.Q. it's merely unwatchable. Don't bother.

WITCHCRAFT '70 [Angeli Bianchi...Angeli Neri] (1970). This Italian mondo documentary promises to take us into the world of the occult, but it's mostly just an excuse to give viewers heaping helpings of tawdry Euro-sleaze (so much so, the flick was initially given an X-rating). Directed by Luigi Scattini, and with "additional sequences" later tacked on by R.L.Frost, the film kicks off with some big (unintentional) laughs when we're introduced to a lumpen California cop. I bet you didn't know that outside of the drug epidemic, the

biggest problem with young people is their interest in the occult—which, in combination with dangerous hallucinogenics, can “blow their mind”! But if these globe-hopping filmmakers are trying to prove his piss-ant contentions, they’re out of luck, because no matter how hard they try to make their subjects look perverse and shocking, it left me cold... We’re witness to a “black mass”, where they light candles, one guy puts on a rubber goat mask and all the women take off their

blouses. It’s your standard gig, complete with a nude female alter, but cynics will realize that it’s simply a chance for ugly, unlikable guys to boff some cute, gullible gals—sort of a Satanic Dating Service for the dysfunctional. After that, we get a few sad old women who claim to be witches; one bozo who’s a timid real estate agent by day, a satanic high priest by night; plus some hippies tripping out by a campfire while grooving on satan (with the ponderous narrator trying to frighten us

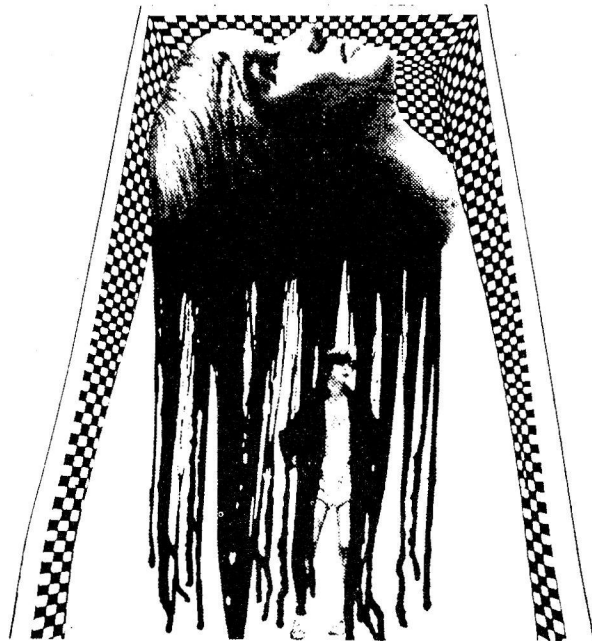


by alluding to Manson and his pals). Hands down, the most interesting bits are when their cameras head to the Third World, in order to capture voodoo rituals. Bathed in dreamlike hysteria, we get spastic dancing, blood drinking, copious alcohol and drug consumption, and an eye for the twistedly spectacular—looking like outtakes from a Brazilian production of “Dante’s Inferno”. The film eventually wraps up with a quick visit to the home of hedonistic ol’ Anton LeVey, plus a brief history of The Church of Satan. And hell, after getting a gander at some of his “busomy acolytes”, I can’t think of a better reason to embrace a religion... While the similarly themed THE OCCULT EXPERIENCE [SC#4] covered the same ground in more studiously detail, this often-tedious tome is more concerned with the trashy side of the coin. A gratuitous, voyeur-eye view that only skims the surface, yet manages to prove that even if these occult religions might seem as ludicrous as any two-faced Christian dogma-nure, at least the disciples seem to be having fun and getting laid in the process.

THE DRUG KNOT (1986). Teen-oriented anti-drug films have come and gone, but this hour-long TV diatribe is a true classic of this genre. And like any shitty AfterSchool Special, it’s about as subtle as a punt to the groin. Although I don’t think the show has been rerun since its first telecast, let’s hope that someday it becomes a family tradition, in a league with HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS, IT’S THE GREAT PUMPKIN, CHARLIE BROWN, or Cinemax’s annual showing of H.O.T.S... Directed by that fine American auteur, Anson Williams (yep, fuckin’ Potzie was behind the camera!), this is the cliché-riddled tale of teenagers under the influence. The prime candidate for self-destruction is young Dermot Mulroney (star of WHERE THE DAY TAKES YOU, yet another ham-handed teen angst fest), an ego-fed high schooler who smokes grass, snorts coke, plays the saxophone (badly), and even argues with his parents! Perennial sitcom whore Tracy Nelson co-stars as his worried white-bread girlfriend, and a pre-MARRIED WITH CHILDREN David Faustino is his little brother. But what sets this entire endeavor apart from the ordinary lemming-like “Just Say No” propaganda is the presence of David Toma, who stars as himself, doing what he does in real life—travelling to schools, lecturing about the evils of chemical abuse, and (though the show conveniently forgets to mention this part) getting paid quite lucratively to do so. The students are rounded up in the gym, and this condescending clod tells them the real truth about

“grass, reefer, maryjane, joint, stick, point, weed, marijuana”, plus plenty of inspirational tales of kids “blowing their minds”. He’s got cool stories about one kid who ran down the street naked and gouged out his own eyes after an Angel Dust high. Or the infamous student who rotted out all his nose cartilage from too much cocaine. (Damn, the guy sure knows some interesting neighborhoods. All my high school ever did was smoke skanky grass and steal beers from the 7-11.) Of course, Toma’s goomba scare tactics have every student glued to every word, and this suburban messiah gets a standing ovation from the teary teens at the end (even the Metalheads, who haven’t cried since Ozzy left Black Sabbath). Toma really cares about these kids—and it’s obvious how much he cares about those pubescent teenaged girls when he takes them aside for long, hard hugs and one-on-one Tough Love talks. This show pulls out EVERY melodramatic plot twist and easy target in order to grind out this tragic tale of misspent youth. But the only thing this drama definitively proves is that Anson Williams is as big an asswipe as we all suspected. Utterly hilarious bombast, and best enjoyed while on heroin.

If you can't have the real thing—
you do all kinds of unreal things.

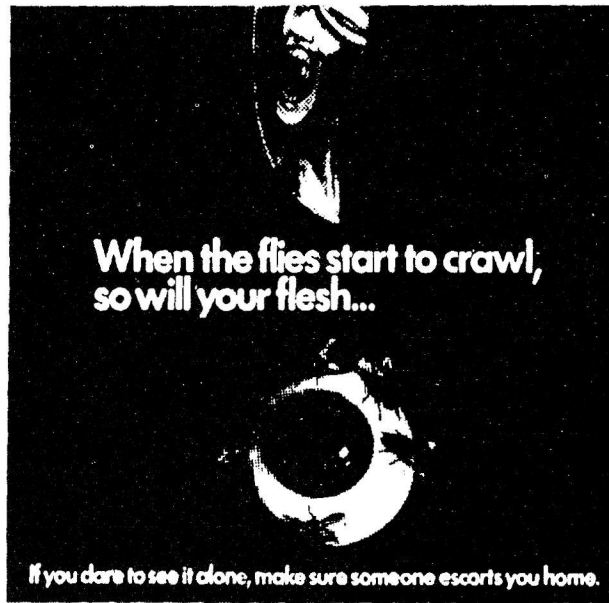


“DEEP END”

DEEP END (1970). Jerzy Skolimowski’s directorial career has had its ups and downs (with highs such as THE SHOUT and MOON-LIGHTING), but his career began with this offbeat tale of obsessive, destructive love. Sounds right up my alley, eh? John Moulder Brown stars as Mike, a teen who gets a job as a bathhouse attendant in London, and has his first taste of distasteful lust when the older ladies begin coming onto him. Tongue-tied when it comes to sex, or just about anything else, this immature youth makes friends with another employee, Susan—a pretty, older woman (barely in her twenties)—and begins to fall for her leggy charms and flirtatious ways. Red-headed Jane Asher makes a lovely object of desire, and she embodies the pros and cons of that carefree era of swinging London. She’s spontaneous, seductive, cruel and vapid. And after one long kiss from Susan, Mike finds himself stalking her to edgy comic effect. Eavesdropping on her plans to marry a weaselly sort, fondling her in

an X-rated cinema, and wallowing in his downward emotional spiral. For the first half, this film is yet another humorous look at the sad twists of love, but halfway through it, you realize it's taken on a darker tone. Suddenly, the nerdy Mike has acquired a malicious edge as his "love" turns in on itself, like a dead animal. In other words, the movie's remarkably true to life, as anyone who's felt unrequited love knows. Before long, he's stumbling through the subways, lugging a nude, life-size cardboard woman, snapping at everyone around him, and manipulating Susan into a touchingly perverse denouement. Slight, but ultimately haunting, Skolimowski gives the film a nervous, voyeuristic coating (which also adds to its deceptively erotic appeal), and it's certainly not a light-hearted romp. The leads are tragic figures, the supporting cast of bathhouse matrons are a sad and lonely lot, and mod London has never looked so uninviting (with Jerzy focusing on garish strip clubs and whorehouses). Let's not forget the period-evoking (not to mention, bile-rising) score by Cat Stevens and The Can. An increasingly tense, dreamlike drama from an (at that time) uncompromising filmmaker.

DEATH LAID AN EGG [La Morte Ha Fatto L'Uovo, La Mort A Pondu un Oeuf] [a.k.a. PLUCKED] (1969). First brought to my attention years ago by Craig Ledbetter, this French/Italian thriller is an oddity that continually roams into bizarre territory. It's also a film that typifies what's great (and godawful) about this unique European genre. Sure, it incorporates utterly original twists and an enticing style, but it's also so pretentiously over-the-top that you can't help but laugh. And for every incredible sequence, you invariably have to trudge through half a dozen stultifying ones...Most of the film is centered around a high-tech chicken ranch, run by the murderous Jean-Louis Trintignant and his wife, ex-sexy Gina Lollobrigida. But when pretty Ewa Aulin (CANDY) moves in, Jean-Louis and Ewa go at it like rabbits, and plan to kill off the missus. That's the basic plotline. A pretty simple lust 'n' revenge tale, right? Nah! Because it's crammed to the rafters with odd sidestreets that are totally unpredictable, unbelievable and unbeatable! You see, Trintignant also happens to be a mass murderer, who likes slicing throats of middle-aged prostitutes; at one point we visit a mod party packed with atrocious fashion-sense and wild images; and after the numerous close-ups of those damned chickens (Terrifying? How about ridiculous?), we learn that the ranch's genetic experimentation has begun breeding mutant chickens that are ALL white meat (but alas, have no heads!). The flick mixes satire of the chicken industry with horrific moments, as discordant music grates at your nerve endings. The direction by Giulio Questi is WAYYYYYY out there (I loved the romantic conversation that's inexplicably filmed in the middle of a corn field), plus, the finale is both appropriately sadistic and tacky, with the poultry farm playing a pluperfect part. The result is disorienting, ludicrous, and expertly pulled-off. Pocked with dull moments (which give you a chance to grab another much-needed beer), but so goddamned weird that you gotta give 'em credit for creating something so beautifully perplexing.



Produced and Screenplay by Dario Argento
A film directed by Dario Argento

"Four Flies on Grey Velvet"

PG

FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET (1971). Director Dario Argento is beloved by fans of pastland horror for pushing the stylistic boundaries of the shock genre. Unfortunately, the guy has never broken through to mainstream critics, or gotten the financial hit that would solidify his career. Maybe that's because despite all his bold, brutal sequences and evocative camerawork, Dario still can't tell a simple damned story! Sure, his work is mood-drenched and often quite visceral, but it always lacks emotional resonance for a viewer looking for even a glimmer of humanity, with leads as cold as the corpses punctuating the plot. **FOUR FLIES** is an early work (and one of the few unavailable on video) that gives us much of the promise that still remains unfulfilled two decades later, while helping set the formula for the avalanche of splatter psycho flicks that were to come in the late '70s (including the now-hoary Killer-Eye-View Cam). Mod (but plywood-stiff) Michael Brandon stars as a drummer in a Rome-based rockband

who, after accidentally killing a stranger, finds himself pursued. Meanwhile, other characters are getting slaughtered off by some madman, as this innocent moron searches for the answers. As usual for Argento, the plot plays second fiddle to the various set pieces. But for every bit of spectacularly bizarre business (an evil doll-faced character popping out of the shadows, or a victim spitting a mouthful of blood into the camera lens), we get ten minutes of ineptly-dubbed non-actors roaming through a distinctly uneventful plot. At the end, the murderer's identity is uncovered by the sudden announcement of a new scientific discovery which can record the final image seen by a dead man's retina (hence the flick's obtuse title, in case you were wondering). Paramount supposedly clipped the film by 10 minutes for its original U.S. release, but I can't imagine much was lost. It still plods along, spiced occasionally by its glossy veneer, yet always cloaked in irritatingly murky indulgence. Co-starring Mimsy Farmer and Italian juggernaut Bud Spencer.

GOOD TIMES (1967). I guess every director has to start somewhere. And poor shitheaded William Friedkin (hey, I've met the guy twice, and both times he came off like an ego-fed fuck) first put his name on this then-hip slop—the feature film debut of Sonny and Cher! Even though it tries to be a satire on contemporary moviemaking, this commercial pabulum is certainly no HEAD. The result is alternately obvious and mundane, and when a movie hangs its hopes on the natural charisma of Sonny Bono, you KNOW it's in serious trouble...Sonny and Cher play themselves, and the excuse for a plot has the duo searching for their first motion picture project by roaming through several fantasy ideas. First we're given a western with Sonny as Sheriff Irving Ringo; followed by a limp Tarzan rip-off called "Jungle Morey, King of the Jungle"; and even a deadening private eye homage. Luckily, before the viewer is forced to watch any more of this prime-time-level dreck, Oscar-winner George Sanders (now forced to play second fiddle to Sonny Bono, poor guy) enters as a scummy studio exec who tricks S&C into accepting a hillbilly script that would make 'em look like fools (hard to believe). Along the way, we're exposed to the pair's most excruciating tunes, and if this film is any

mirror of reality, Sonny and Cher were one of the most boring couples in showbiz—living in a suburban home outta *THE BRADY BUNCH* and swaddled in superficial '60s trappings. Sonny is supposed to be cute and appealingly klutzy, but instead he comes off like Flower Power's answer to Pauly Shore with a Prince Valiant haircut. And Cher simply looks bored—or maybe she was just suffering from mascara overdose...The bottom line: If you don't care about the stars, their music, their backlot plight, or even if they kick the bucket, why bother watching this colorful, vapid crap? It's simply another "counterculture" movie made by-and-for decrepit old farts who wanted to cash in on the nutty, groovy youth phenomenon of the late '60s. Abrasive, pandering, humorless, and perpetually peppy, this is a time capsule that should remain buried.

RUN, ANGEL, RUN! (1969). When it comes to the biker movie influx of the late '60s, this enjoyable item seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle. Maybe that's because it didn't have any cult marquee value, like Jack, Dennis or Peter. Or perhaps it came too late in a short lived genre. But director Jack Starrett meshes a pop veneer with some fresh twists on the Hoodlums-on-Harleys clichés. The opening credits are a flash of rapid-fire psychedelia, giving us the premise in a nutshell: Angel, the brutish head of a biker gang, has sold out and gone public by selling his life story to "Like Magazine" for a fast ten grand. Subsequently, every badass biker is after his hide. And all this hooy is given granite-jawed conviction by thug-character-actor-extraordinaire William Smith (*INVASION OF THE BEE GIRLS*, *GRAVE OF THE VAMPIRE*) in the lead. Though never accused of award-winning acting potential, Smith was surely one of the most authentic looking actors to grace the chopper era. Not to mention, the only lead who could take a barroom crowd apart with his bare hands. So, with a groovy femme journalist (Valerie Starrett, the director's wife) in tow, Smith hits the highway in hopes of escaping the ass-whipping he's sure to get from his ex-cronies. Eventually the duo settles down in a li'l cottage in the middle of nowhere, with Smith kicking back with his newfound cash, good grass, and (best of all, man) freedom. He even tries his hand at raising sheep, but as we all know, no one in an exploitation movie can run from his/her past, and before long the romance goes sour, a quartet of hairball buddies show up and take a pretty blonde (Margaret Markov) hostage, and Angel is backed into a corner. Though Smith's character is firmly two-dimensional (that's quite a stretch compared to the guy's usual fare), he doesn't let his fans down, cuz the guy's still a boorish, drunken, misogynist with a 30-inch neck. Unlike the classic *THE WILD ANGELS*, there's not one iota of reality on screen, but director Starrett has a solid grasp on both the excitement and silliness of drive-in pix (evidenced by such cross-genre hits as *CLEOPATRA JONES* and *RACE WITH THE DEVIL*). And the entire thing is so creatively lensed that the creaky clichés are secondary, with effective use of multiple split screens (sometimes FIVE at a time!) which only add to its current-day kitsch. What more could you ask for in a bikerama? A cast packed with neanderthals, plenty of cool visuals, and even a valid (albeit hokey) subtext about a man finding himself. Plus, prepare yourself for the insipid, sphincter-tightening theme song, sung by Tammy Wynette (what the FUCK were they thinking?). Solid one-week-only trash, and recommended to fans of the grubby genre.



ANDY KAUFMAN: I'M FROM HOLLYWOOD (1989). This is without question, the funniest damned video to be released by a major label in 1992! A portrait of this generation's most original, misunderstood comic talents, the late Andy Kaufman, at the most tumultuous time in his career—when the guy tossed himself headfirst into the pin-headed world of pro wrestling! And if all this weren't captured on film, no one would EVER believe it. It all began when Kaufman, at the height of his fame, became obsessed with recruiting women from out of his audience and wrestling them on stage. I got the chance to see Kaufman at this point in his career, and lemme tell you, it was a mind-damaging display, with most of the crowd truly believing the guy was a few bricks short of a load, and his misogynistic routine swiftly souring the crowd's sympathy for the guy. But this remarkable video gives us the full picture—an in-your-face look at the most self-destructive career move in entertainment history, as well as one of the most wickedly hilarious. We get Andy's straight-faced bantering about how a woman's place is in the kitchen, and how on a genetic scale they're just above dogs. But things became even more evil when pro-wrestler Jerry Lawler challenged Kaufman to a much-publicized match, during which he pile-drove Andy into an Emergency Room. This is the point at which Andy became a total, unhinged madman on-camera, ranting that he could do anything he wanted since "I'm a star...I'm from Hollywood." To prove his wrestling skill he stomps on a fat woman, smashing her head on the ground until she passes out, while explaining that it's all O.K. since "she's poor, she can't sue me." And after Lawler takes him apart, Andy offers \$5000 to any wrestler who could "cripple" Lawler, hits the local wrestling circuit, and even goes on TV to demonstrate to his redneck audience how to use a bar of soap! You can't help but question Kaufman's sanity...Expertly lashed together by writer/director/editor team Lynne Margulies and Joe Orr, and featuring interviews with Robin Williams,

Marilu Henner and Tony Danza, this is comedy from some alternative universe. Stranger still, after watching his demented escapades, you begin wondering if the guy's really dead after all—or perhaps it's just the perfect joke, which has gotten a little out of control.

BLACKSNAKE [a.k.a. SWEET SUZY] (1973). Any good sleazemaven knows the career of Russ Meyer, King of the D-Cups, by heart. And though most of work is readily available through Russ himself, I once thought his two incredible studio flicks, *BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS* and *THE SEVEN MINUTES* [SC#1], were the most difficult to obtain. Not so, because after his swift fallout with the 20th Century Fox toadies, Russ helmed this feature—a lurid tale of racial tensions and trollops which is so hard to find that the only print I could locate was a French-dubbed version with English subtitles! And since the entire thing is set in the British West Indies in the mid-1800's, watching these plantation slaves spouting French was certainly an odd sight. As usual, expect nothing but the finest quality trash from the master misogynist, but instead of setting his sights on high satire and low-cut blouses, Russ

tackles the controversial topic of race relations—with all the subtlety of a large railroad spike being imbedded into the top of your head. But when audiences stayed away in droves, Meyer promptly returned to his old T&A territory. Though no where near his best, it's still an often spectacular hoot, full of wild set pieces and exhaustive escapades...Anouska Hempel stars as Lady Susan, the blonde,

bitch plantation mistress who wields the Blacksnake (a.k.a. whip) over her male minions. There's torture aplenty for all you sadists out there, with runaway slaves staked out on the ground or even crucified, and a vile workboss in a white, sweat-caked suit spittin' his lines in the extras' faces. One of the many silly subplots has an English aristocrat posing as a servant in order to investigate his brother's mysterious death; yet another has the appearance of a 7-foot killer zombie! Of course, everyone, everything is ready to boil over at a moment's notice, but Meyer has difficulty bringing any of his usual campiness to this setting. At least his frenetic editing is still at large, keeping the viewer visually amused, even while Russ lays on the heavy-handed preaching. Unfortunately, Ms. Hempel makes a pretty, but cold heroine, without the abundant sexuality or self-mocking edge so necessary for this type of meaty role. Happily, the film ends with a satisfying island revolt, when packs of machete-wielding slaves go after the nobles in glorious, overwrought detail. Plus only Russ Meyer could cap off this horseshit with a jaw-dropping message about racial harmony featuring a naked black guy running through a field with a white chick as "Glory, Glory Hallelujah" plays. You gotta love the guy.



JERRY LEWIS, LIVE! (U.S.A. Home Video; 1984). What we have here is a truly wretched viewing experience. 73 excruciating minutes of horseshit posing as entertainment. First off, I should admit that I actually like many of Jerry Lewis' movies, that I absolutely love THE NUTTY PROFESSOR, and that his Labor Day Telethon is always a highlight of smarmy, sanctimonious slop and washed-up Rat Pack wannabees. But this production is virtually unwatchable bile which proves to one and all that Jerry ("one of America's premier funny men," according to the cover) has all the natural charm of Dutch Elm Disease. With the video box still boasting the familiar, youthful caricature of Jerry Lewis—instead of the bloated weasel he's evolved into—we're whisked to the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas, where this aging imbecile enters the stage, dragging his monster ego behind him. Immediately, this greasy Jew shoots off his mouth with deadening jokes about Polacks, Chinese, Southerners, et cetera, while sucking up to the blue-haired Alzheimer's crowd that obviously bused in for the weekend, and were stuck seeing Jerry after Frank Gorshin sold out. Worst of all, Jerry laughs harder at his own limp quips than anyone in the house. But if you think his monologue is painful, wait until the guy begins to sing! His tribute to Al Jolson is the aural equivalent of Epicac. And after thrashing through a variety of vomitable characters (a little boy, an airline pilot), Jerry even drags out his hoary old typewriter pantomime. When performed 30 years ago by a fledgling comic, the skit might've been moderately charming, but when a sweaty, rich, old windbag in a tux is at the helm, it's so pathetic and unspontaneous that you want to shoot the guy and put him out of our misery. Obviously, Jerry thinks he's some kind of Renaissance asswipe, but he's simply an unfunny, lacquer-headed fossil still resting on past laurels and future bar tabs. Personally, I'd rather have seen one of his notorious '70s performances, when Jerry was flying high on Percodan—now THAT might've been funny!

THE SABBATH [La Sorciere] (1987). Director Marco Bellocchio is well known amongst the Lincoln Center contingent for films such as FISTS IN HIS POCKETS and DEVIL IN THE FLESH, but this reincarnation/witch hunt pic of his never even made it to U.S. shores. Though never a big fan, I decided to slog through an unsubtitled copy of the movie, primarily because it stars the always enticing Beatrice Dalle (BETTY BLUE). Ms. Dalle plays a modern-day woman who has reoccurring flashbacks to her past life when she was suspected of being a witch, put on trial and burnt. Her coquettish eyes and seductive pout lure a Doctor under her spell, who then begins having surreal dreams of being chased and attacked by a horde of writhing females. Sure, it sounds like potentially lurid material, but Bellocchio gives it a somber arthouse treatment, with occasional moments of weirdness jarring the pic out of its talky lethargy. Such as an inquisition flashback where a naked young witch is probed and poked by a tribunal of 'pious' old lechers. Or (in

one of many pretentiously laughable moments) when our Doc first encounters Dalle and is instantly enchanted—not-so-subtly suggested by the fact that Beatrice begins spinning like a pinwheel before him. The Doctor then proceeds to roam through the past and present, taking time out to play squat thrust with Dalle and follow her about like a lovestruck puppy. But viewers should be warned that much of the movie consists of ponderous psycho-babble padding, with a committee of physicians discussing Beatrice's case. Even the finale (a burning at the stake) is lackluster and uninvolved. Every time the large cast began freaking out in some dream-like ritual, I hoped the film was veering into Ken Russell territory, such as in THE DEVILS, but it never approaches that level of in-your-face perversity. Probably because Bellocchio would rather make a mediocre art film than a grand-scale trash epic. A handful of wildly outrageous sequences, moody atmosphere, and a relatively big budget doesn't mean a damn thing if the end result is dull, dull, DULL! Recommended only for the presence of the intoxicating Ms. Dalle—whose natural eroticism could melt the ice in any man's drink.

WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY (1992). Whether you enjoy his films or not, there's no denying that Nick Zedd is one of the seminal forces of the Underground Cinema of Transgression scene (or what little there is left). And this, his latest effort, is a major work. That's not to say it's a GOOD work, or even an enjoyable one. But it sure as hell is a remarkable excursion into the mind and attitude of Zedd, who's still striving to shock/piss-off his sedated audience, while pouring on the meat-cleaver-subtle symbolism. The film consists of a series of non-narrative episodes, strung together by the startling revelation that War is Bad. Mud puddle-deep philosophy with no story, screeching music, eye-throbbing video effects—a combination guaranteed to induce a headache by the halfway point. Zedd can still come up with wild images sure to leave a bad taste in your brainpan, starting off with a guy slowly carving the word 'war' into his bare chest with a razor blade. And ending with a sequence that's one of the most disturbing pieces of film I've seen in some time, during which Annie Sprinkle makes out (in severe close-up) with a burn victim, covered in scar

tissue. It's difficult to keep your eyes on the screen as she sucks his hand, where fingers used to be, but it's also touching in a rather twisted way. In between you get the suspicion that underneath the snappy packaging and Nick's legendary self-promotion, there's not a whole lot there, just snippets of video he had laying about his apartment, lashed together to get some rent money. We get a bunch of Zedd's pals, standing around, drinking. A soldier bayoneting a baby doll. Photos of human deformities and pickled babies. Plus the fabulous Kembra Pfahler taking a video swim in nothing but black hip boots, as Jacques Cousteau footage is grafted behind her, with the twenty minutes sequence (whew! I guess the guy's never heard of the term 'editing') concluding as Kembra masturbates with fake octopus tentacles. In addition, Zedd barely appears on-screen—a mistake since his bored charisma is the glue holding together his best projects. As with many underground productions, it's a lot more interesting to describe than actually endure, and the punk poseur act is getting a little stale and shallow nowadays (not that it wasn't always shallow, mind you). Despite some incredible, powerful moments, most of it plods along with little overall effect. I hope Zedd never stops rolling his cameras though, because he's still the most alternately annoying, tedious, pretentious, and altogether fascinating filmmakers on the independent scene.

HIT MAN (1972). I'll check out anything that has George Armitage's name connected to it. Because whether the end result is good or bad, it's always whacked out of its celluloid skull. In the '70s he gave us scripts for two of the bizzarrest exploitation flicks of all time, *DARKTOWN STRUTTERS* and Roger Corman's *GAS-S-S-S-S*. Then, in 1990, the guy re-erupted onto the scene as director/writer of *MIAMI BLUES*, one of the nastiest, most underrated movies of that year. But two decades ago, at the peak of the blaxploitation craze, Armitage gave us this velour mind-blower. A terrible movie, all in all, but undeniably funky and fashion-savvy, and a showcase for two of that era's finest, Bernie Casey and Pam Grier. Just the sight of big Bernie strutting around, squeezed into a savagely-ugly blood red leisure suit and matching fedora is enough to check it out, but it's Armitage's amoral storytelling that keeps the pic afloat. Essentially, a black remake of the previous year's *GET CARTER*, the plot is simple enough: Tyrone Tackett (Casey) hits town looking for his brother's murderer, and has to infiltrate a world of pimps, prostitutes, porno, and acting school drop-outs. But if you're looking for even a lick of reality, *FORGET IT!* This is the ultimate "nerdy white film school grads trying to make a streetwise flick for the Brothers" movie, and there was more urban truth in an episode of the TV show *JULIA* than in this slop. The tale is crammed with rude stereotypes, misogynistic dialogue, cartoonish violence, an almost surreal use of (what Armitage considered) Black street slang, and an eye for tacky wardrobe that puts the flick on par with *SUPERFLY* and *WILLIE DYNAMITE*. (You gotta love those plaid bell bottoms and shirt lapels the size of airfoils!) Meanwhile, Tyrone is running down thugs, hustlers and winos in his search for the killer, not to mention, taking a little time out to slip his landlady the salami in between the cheap pummelings. Every character is working some sort of scam, nobody's who they seem,

and even though the cast does nothing but pump off shotguns and whore around for the entire 90 minutes, there's barely a cop in sight—obviously there must've been a Donut Convention on the other side of Watts that week. As for Ms. Grier, this film was made before her career took off with Jack Hill's incredible duo of *FOXY BROWN* and *COFFY*, so she's stuck playing a busty bimbo with a big limp afro. I was bored through a lot of this Oreo muddle, but it comes together for a totally insane finale, when Casey puts the pieces together and goes out for hardcore revenge—machine gunning a house full of people and poppin' guys point blank. Nothing new, but for grindhouse nostalgics it's good for a few laughs.

DEAD ALIVE [a.k.a. BRAINDEAD] (1992). This is, without any doubt, my pick for the best gorefest of last year. And as '93 rolls around, this flick (complete with its title change) is finally making it to U.S. theatres, where unsuspecting patrons can revel in this savagely demented splatter epic. The best word to describe this film? Relentless! It's *MONTY PYTHON* meets *RE-ANIMATOR*! This is the third feature from Kiwi sleazemeister Peter Jackson, and his first two works (*BAD TASTE* and *MEET THE FEEBLES* [SC#4]) were chock full of rude humor, disgusting visuals, and a technical savvy that was rare for this type of no-budget nonsense. Well, this New Zealander's latest is by far his grandest, most excessive work—a disgustingly hilarious zombie film that goes to every unimaginable extreme. Drenched in bloodthirsty effects and a severe twistedness that can only come from spending one's formative years swilling back beers and overdosing on drive-in schlock. In other words, I loved it!...The fun begins when a rare (not to mention vicious and ugly) Rat Monkey

of Sumatra is imported to a local zoo. Legend has it that giant rats once raped innocent little tree monkeys, and these hideously poisonous creatures were the result. So when the domineering mother of our hero, Lionel (Timothy Balme), gets a meaty chunk ripped from her flesh, there are sure to be some slight complications. Her wound quickly turns into a throbbing pus-filled lesion, and in the middle of a dinner party, one of her ears sudden rots away from her skull and falls into her custard (of course, the old gal promptly eats it!). Mom's zombie sickness quickly spreads, and soon you're got 'em stumbling through graveyards (as the re-animated dead are known to do on occasion) while good son Lionel tries to hide these drooling, carnivorous victims in his basement. We get decapitations, mutilations, dogs as appetizers, hypodermics up the nose, plus one one victim walking about with their pendulous head virtually ripped from their body. And wouldn't you know it, all this chaos occurs just as Lionel

has found true love with the lovely Paquita (Diana Penalver). Now, all of this might sound rather sick (and it is), but it's also so fucking funny it'll make you spit up your beer and shit your pants (is that a recommendation, or what?!). I dare you not to laugh when Lionel begins sliding about in ankle-deep entrails while trying to escape. Plus, what other living dead tale would feature a kung fu minister? Or a newborn zombie infant? Or a half-hour finale during which a houseful of rowdy, besotted partygoers are attacked by the hungry undead, with Jackson giving the viewer an unending parade of grotesqueries that makes *DAWN OF THE DEAD* look like Neil



MGM presents **HIT MAN**
Starring **BERNIE CASEY** Co-starring **PAMELA GRIER**
Screenplay by **GEORGE ARMITAGE** - Based Upon the Novel "Jack's Return Home" by **TED LEWIS** - Produced by **GENE CORMAN** Directed by **GEORGE ARMITAGE**
METROCOLOR

Simon. Though never really scary, the film is crammed with richly textured disgust, gruesome slapstick, and a camera dexterity on par with early Raimi. Surprisingly, the pic also has some emotional resonance, since Lionel spends the whole show not only trying to romance Paquita, but also care for his "family" of cannibalistic acquaintances...Go see this film immediately (in its uncut form, because if anyone chops it for an R-rating, the thing will only be 45 minutes long). Peter Jackson is a deranged genius. Pure and simple.

DEATH SCENES (1989). For the record, I have no great love for the *FACES OF DEATH* series and all their slow-witted clones, all of which are marketed for and ingested by the lowest dregs of the video market. But *DEATH SCENES* is by far the best of this sordid lot. Sure, it's depressingly graphic and packed with morbid voyeurism, but it's also all true, instead of other flicks' dramatizations and faked footage. Hosted by everyone's favorite Satanist, Dr. Anton LaVey, this takes a different approach than expected, with LaVey using his experiences as an L.A. crime photographer as a stepping stone to take us into the world of True Crime in the early half of this century. Culled from California police department murder photos, the viewer is shown some of the most notoriously gruesome murders of that era, as the always happy-go-lucky Anton tells us the tale behind each blood-caked epitaph. In fact, *THIS* is the real *PUBLIC EYE*, not last year's whitewashed Joe Pesci flick...It begins on the cheery note of suicide, with plenty of ultra-graphic b&w photos of shotgun victims, immolations, and even one guy who stuffed a blasting cap up his nostril (ouch). And then this coroner-eye view of civilization moves on to faces blown into pulp, bodies decomposed or bloated from the river, internal organs poured onto the floor, ghastly auto accidents, et cetera—so snuggle up in front of the TV set with your dinner and enjoy! Meanwhile, LaVey overlays the pics with anecdotes about celebrity demises (Thelma Todd, Lupe Velez, Ted Healy, and even the Black Dahlia case), gangland crime scenes (Dillinger, Bonnie & Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd), and then-notorious killers (such as James "Bluebeard" Watson, a hermaphrodite who killed and disfigured with acid over 25 women). Not to mention murder/suicides between loving couples, axe murders, infanticide, drunken arguments gone awry, and the whole, wide, wonderful world of Death! Admittedly, it gets monotonous watching 86 minutes of frozen, lifeless images devoted to man's unceasing capacity for butchery, but the matter-of-fact narration by LaVey keeps it uncomfortably fascinating (i.e. "While the mutilated woman sat gasping—guttured and barely alive...her husband proceeded to beat her to death with a metal meat grinding tool."). I wouldn't call this barrage of death entertaining by any stretch of the imagination, but it does manage to capture the darker hues of humanity, and the truth ain't always pleasant.

THE WILD, WILD PLANET [I Criminali Delia Galassia/The Criminals of the Galaxy] (1967). From the opening shots of cheezy miniature cities, Aurora model spaceships hanging against a starry backdrop, and spacemen 'floating' about on big, obvious wires, I knew this Italian-lensed sci-fi slop was perfect 3 a.m. viewing. Not a lick of intelligence, but colorful as hell and laughable from start to finish. Plus, the plot is so disjointed and convoluted that you don't have to worry about missing anything if you have to run to the bathroom for a long beer shit. Set in the year 2015, we've got our usual pack of futuristic stereotypes, including a stalwart crew on space station Gamma One, scientists tampering with nature, and ladies with tight plastic costumes and big hair who are actually hostile aliens. These over-permed dames are behind the disappearance of dozens of people in Capital City—shrinking humans down to the size of Barbie Dolls and packing them in suitcases so they can be easily smuggled back to their home planet of Delphos. Groovy visuals notwithstanding, this is pretty routine crap, with a long, dull investigation taking center stage, led by tepid Tony Russell and his

interchangeable underlings. Luckily, the film always comes back to life when the fabulous, evil babes return, aided by their four-armed, bald androids. And when the stultifying male cast arrives at the ladies' "wild, wild planet", would you like to take a guess at how the macho earthlings save the Earth? They simply deck the bad guys! Now, wasn't that too fucking easy?...Directed by Anthony Dawson (you're not fooling anyone, Antonio Margheriti!) and featuring Lisa Gastroni, Franco Nero and a cast of badly-dubbed, forgettable faces, this film is so idiotic it makes *GAMERA* look like 2001. Mentally deadening, but the fab costumes, ultra-futuristic props, and flame-shooting rayguns are sure to keep anyone amused.

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men with their
intense heat!...

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strangler
with arms of
steel...

Evil
experiments in
flesh-fusion!...

A deadly
army of tiny
doll-men!...

A mad
doctor whose
monstrous
planet holds
the universe
at bay!

NOW
SHOWING!

"WILD, WILD PLANET"

J.C. (1971). The only thing worse than a pretentious biker movie is a dull one. And so-called-director William McGaha manages to hit both bases at once with this pathetic, preachy pabulum posing as a cycle flick. The beginning might be appealing in an ass-backwards, inept fashion, but after that it's straight into the loo. The title hairball, J.C. (played by the multi-untalented McGaha), is a pot-bellied biker in bell bottoms, who's first seen riding through Bumfuck U.S.A. as the theme song (performed by pop nobodies Bethany) warbles the touching lyrics "I'm just a man who don't know where he's going." After spending a day sitting around his pad in ripped underwear, smoking grass, the guy has a stoned vision of saving the world from self-destruction. So J.C. (Get it? J.C.? Jesus Christ? What a load!) rounds up his biker pals, rants incessantly about them all being "god's children", and these boneheads follow him like perfect Republicans-to-be. The gang hits the open road and the shit flies when they enter the first redneck berg and come face-to-face with Sheriff Slim Pickins, since the townsfolk don't understand these rude, wise-assed dirtbags' holy mission (and frankly, neither does the audience). So far, the flick is only mildly dull, but when the bikers link up with J.C.'s long separated sister, it becomes painfully, excruciatingly dull! The already limp excuse for a plot screeches to a rubber-burning halt, and all we're left with is some mundane antagonism between the town and the bikers, plus cheap moralizing about peace, love, and all that whiny crap. Even when something happens—like when the

gang's token black gets beaten up—it has all the kinetic energy of an Ozu flick. It's pedantic slop featuring a cast of thespic cripples, not to mention the type of mess that would have most biker movie fans lobbing their empty 40 ouncers at the screen.

whacked Off-Off-Broadway play—THAT'S how pretentious it is!). But Cohen's love of razor-edged humor and sledgehammer symbolism make this a true crude find, aided immeasurably by George Folsey Jr.'s unsubtle cinematography and editing. Dead solid weirdness.

THE AMBULANCE (1991). On the other side of the Larry Cohen timeline is this—one of his most recent productions—which has been sitting on a shelf, collecting dust without even a nominal U.S. release. As always, Cohen never seems to have any luck when it comes to distribution. Though nothing startling, this flick is a creepy (albeit improbable) suspense, complete with evil doctors, paranoid plot twists, and plenty of guest stars. Since Cohen's favorite thespian, Michael Moriarty, was unavailable due to his prime time stint, he had to find someone else with the same manic edge and ability to keep a straight face while spouting Cohen's over-the-top dialogue. The result: Eric Roberts, once again sporting the sleazebag persona he has down to the hilt. Roberts plays an artist at Marvel Comics (Warning: Stan Lee cameo!), who enjoys hitting on young babes in the street. But one day, one of his lunchtime conquests has a fainting spell and is whisked away by an ambulance—only to disappear from the face of the earth when Roberts tries to track her down. Pretty soon another woman in his company is taken away by the same sinister, '50s-style ambulance, and Roberts teams up with cantankerous old reporter Red Buttons, as the plot takes on COMA-like complications and characters begin disappearing faster than beers from my fridge. Along the way, toss in James Earl Jones as a quirky, gum-chewing cop, and what we have is utterly unbelievable hokum, with characters as dimwitted as anyone in a FRIDAY THE 13TH pic. In particular, Roberts is a hoot—running about without the barest self-preservation instinct, and subsequently getting mugged, pummeled, run over, chased, et cetera, for the entire 96 minutes. BUT as any fan of Cohen's work knows, the guy often doesn't even seem to care about the central plot. Its true pleasures lie in the sly sidelines of the script (i.e. darkly comic supporting characters, whacked conspiracy subplots, cruel humor) rather than the standard thriller mechanisms. Pure trash, directed with style and wit, as only Cohen can dish it out.

DERANGED (1974). This is a film that more people have heard about than actually seen, since it's never officially been released on video and only played the 42nd Street area when originally released in NYC (strangely enough, the snobby New York Times actually gave it a favorable mention in an old article on Deuce fare). Like so many other horror films, this is loosely based on the wacky legacy of Ed Gein, and it probably comes closest to the truth of any of 'em. It's an ultra-low budget portrait of madness and obsession, with its strength coming from the lead performance by Roberts Blossom (it certainly isn't from the static, unoriginal direction by Jeff Gillen and Alan Ormsby, who also starred in CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS). As rural maniac Ezra Cobb, Blossom has true presence, and his down home demeanor and drawl almost make you forget the ol' guy's a murderous, grave-robbing necrophiliac who enjoys skinning women in his barn and wearing his victims' flayed flesh. Just imagine if you crossed Norman Bates with Jed Clampett, and voila!...Left alone by the death of his female-hating mother, Ezra soon goes Backwoods Bonkers, and even though mom's been rotting in the ground for a year, he has the bright idea of digging her up and taking her back home. In order to keep mom from falling apart into little smelly pieces, Ezra has to keep stitching her together using fresh human flesh—first borrowing freshly buried corpses, and when they run out, working his way through the more animated townsfolk. In one of the creepiest moments, Cobb kidnaps a sexy, white trash barmaid and brings her to a dinner party populated by cadavers. The entire tale is blunt, demented, yet (surprisingly) un-graphic, with splashes of sicko humor (like when Ezra matter-of-factly tells his neighbors about his graverobbing, and these hick pea-brains think it's a joke). Despite all

Yaphet Kotto
Jeannie Berlin
Andrew Duggan
Joyce Van Patten

BONE

Loud
brassy
biting
clever
fresh
bold
glittering
offbeat
compelling
Truth
humor
devastating
fun²

Hilarious
murder
rape
comedy
inventive
tough³
Caustic
kinky
droll⁴
Raw
jagged
power
demolishes⁵

Written, Produced and Directed by LARRY COHEN
THE TOUGH COMEDY WITH IMPORTANT REVIEWS.

HOUSEWIFE [a.k.a. BONE, DIAL RAT FOR TERROR, BEVERLY HILLS NIGHTMARE] (1972). By any of its numerous titles, this film is a bravura directorial debut from Larry Cohen. A pitch black comedy about the curdling of the American Dream and suburbia gone sour. And in typical boneheaded Hollywood tradition, its distributor had no fucking idea how to promote the thing. Some ads made it look like blaxploitation fodder, simply because it starred occasional grindhouse-star Yaphet Kotto. Others focused on the critical raves. Neither approach brought in one iota of business...Andrew Duggan stars as a smarmy used car salesman, with a wife (Joyce Van Patten) who's happy to just sit at poolside getting skin cancer. Two upper-middle class snobs whose lives turn inside out when their home is invaded by Bone (Kotto), a thief who begins playing mindgames on the couple. But when Bone can't find any cash on the premises (because the couple are completely in debt), he holds the wife hostage while Duggan goes to the bank to empty his savings account. So far, it sounds like any old suspense flick, but Cohen's caustic wit eats through the predictable package, and the real fun begins when Duggan decides NOT to save his whiny wife after all. Instead, a dippy young hippie (Jeannie Berlin) catches his horny eye, and he ends up in her bed, leaving his missus to the potential rapist/murderer. Meanwhile, Joyce and Yaphet are bonding over coddled eggs, peeling away each other's emotional shields, while discussing racial and sexual attitudes over cocktails. Every potential cliché is spun on its ass—with Joyce nearly seducing Kotto, Yaphet turning into the sensitive type, and the two of 'em joining forces when they realize they've been burnt by scumbag Duggan. The end result is hilarious, virtually uncategorizable fare that must've had urban audiences perplexed (and more than a little pissed off) by its absurdist sensibilities and lack of kickass violence. The quartet of leads have a field day with their overwrought, overwritten roles (it often sounds like a

the technical short-comings and stylistic wrong-turns (i.e. the plot is continually interrupted by a lumpy reporter---after a while you wish Ezra would leap out of the shadows and eviscerate the dweeb), Blossom somehow manages to bring texture and sympathy to a role that could've been completely reprehensible. It's a restrained, intelligent, four-star performance trapped in a cheapjack, two-star movie.

A POTPOURRI OF INDEPENDENTS. The world of independently produced films/videos has taken an upsurge recently, and it's about fuckin' time. Only a few years ago, it was virtually impossible to locate underground pics (such as the loosely basted "Cinema of Transgression"). You could read about 'em in 'zines, but the only way to actually see them was to track down the squat the filmmaker was currently crashing in, send them some cash, and if they weren't too strung out on bad heroin, you might actually receive a copy in the mail. But thanks to people like Film Threat Video, the fine work of such low-budget luminaries as Richard Kern, Lisa Houle and Craig Baldwin is readily accessible to unsuspecting Mom & Pop video stores. This has prompted a lot of closet filmmakers to begin distributing their own short works, and here's a sampling of some of the more interesting ones...**WE WHO ARE NOT OTHERS (1991)** may have been conceived as an N.Y.U. undergrad project by writer/director David Capper, but don't expect some whiny, p.c. howl. Instead, it's a powerful, gritty portrait of insanity, as personified by John Ruin, a chunk of shaggy human flotsam. Flashing back to the guy's upbringing, we see his redneck sheriff dad tossing him out while in his teens. And pretty soon the snails on a mushroom are talking—telling John that he's the "new messiah". When you begin taking advice from stray mollusks, you know you're in trouble, so John kills his father, moves to New York City and becomes a bearded East Village squatter. Capper packs an entire world of punks, poseurs and prophecies into a brisk 38 minutes, as Ruin (well played by Michael Ringer) obsesses about feeding his homeless pals, obsesses about his love for artist roomie Paisley (Cara O'Shea), and most of all, obsesses about his Jesus Trip. Until the guy finally flips his fake wig and brings us to a spectacularly gruesome finale. Driven by character development, rather than cheap shock tactics, this is a fascinating, strikingly lensed (and would you believe, true) tale. The only sign of trendy pretentiousness is the pic's abrasive Goth Queen narrator, doing a 3rd rate Lydia Lunch routine...It's no surprise that a lot of people who were initially bowled over by David Lynch's early films are getting sick of his current, facile efforts, and **WHITE**

TRASH AT HEART (1992; Holy Sin Productions) is a half-hour parody that takes **WILD AT HEART** to the cleaners. Directed by Lisa Pudosin, it's a savvy satire kept buoyant by its energy and swift pace. Holly Angell Hardman (who also wrote it) stars in the Laura Dern role of Lula Looza, a vapid southern belle who goes on a search for David Lynch by clicking the heels of her red pumps together. All the overwrought imagery is on hand (cigarettes lit in close-up, uvulas, dancing feet), plus Elvis impressions, **WIZARD OF OZ** references, et cetera, and though never mean-spirited, it takes Lynch's sledgemo-

mer technique to its illogical limits. Best of all is when Lula runs into crazy Cousin Crispy Hopper—a character that perfectly embodies the strangest, silliest aspects of David Lynch. A kickass score featuring The A-Bones, Poison Idea and The Workdogs keeps pumping away, even if the jokes occasionally fall flat...**STILL MOVING (1990; Brad Bell, 42 Coolmine Road, Toronto, Ontario M6J 3E9, Canada; \$19.95)** is an interestingly structured view of death and love, as seen through the eyes of a young man whose wife is in a coma after an auto accident. Only 15 minutes long and shot with all the pretentious finesse of a good film school project, it also has a texture and grim nihilism that sets it slightly apart from the pack. As his love lays in the hospital, director/star Bradley Bell sits at her bedside and hallucinates, as he's forced to confront his own mortality, as well as his wife's. It's a heavy subject, given a heavy treatment without any answers. Primarily an abstract mood piece, though I wish it'd traded some of its antiseptic tone for a little warmth...Bruce Hodge's **THE JOY OF VACUUMING (1992)** is a short (14 minutes), entertaining episode set in a "post-modern, yet tasteful" apartment and starring Holly Adams. One day, she comes across a TV show about vacuum cleaners, and it brings back fond memories of her first vacuum cleaner (complete with ALL the accessories). Plus the gent who sold it to her and boffed her in the back room of the vacuum

cleaner shoppe. Filled with dry, deadpan humor, we watch her assembling its parts and longing for it ("I turned it on, and it turned on me."). The pic's (literal) climax makes for a truly bizarre image, and if this film were seen by more people, vacuum cleaner sales to housewives would undoubtedly skyrocket. Professionally lensed and edited, and perfectly guided by Ms. Adams as the haunted heroine...**THE COMPLETE UNFINISHED WORKS OF PAUL KAZEE** is an 18 minute compilation, consisting of a half dozen brief films. All are well shot and edited, proving Kazee has an eye for the camera, but some are so slight they almost vaporize from the screen. "Master Stroke" is a one-joke vignette that takes religion under cover; "Pissed Off!" uses a urine sample as a cheap gag; and "Last Words of Smokey the Bear" is an odd, Dr. Caligariesque public service message about libraries. All are mildly amusing, and short enough that you don't have time to get bored. But there's one true highlight in the pack, entitled "...And You're So Special?" It's a wonderfully evocative episode set at a SRO-style hotel, with every moment reeking of grim reality—from the tacky wallpaper and no-reception TV, to one character's chintzy terry cloth robe. In it, a "wretched man" sets his sights on an

alluring "wretched neighbor", only to end up miserable and heartbroken. Bukowski-esque in its combination of hope and despair at the poverty level, it's a wonderful little gem...A spoof on Christian religious fanatics entitled **JESUSVILLE (Mike Trippiedi Productions, 605 Compton Ave. Champaign IL 61821; \$20)?** Sounds good to me! Brilliantly kicking off with the hymn "Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb", it quickly turns into a silly tale of crackers for Christ. Though I hoped for a razor-sharp indictment of mindless allegiance, it's instead a short, slight comedy as unsubtle as a kick in the butt. Ed Pierce stars as a normal guy who lies to a



video dating service, telling them he's a Christian in hopes of finding a "nice girl for a change". Of course, it backfires, because his perfect match is a house-coated Bible-spouter who immediately introduces him to her raving minister. And their second date takes him on a religious mission to deprogram a hooker and an encounter with Jim Jones-like Reverend Ray (scenery chewing Will Ridenour). The perfect example of a filmmaker grabbing all his pals and running rampant around his home town. Crude, but good for a couple laughs.

PLAY NICE (1992). Ever since the success the BASIC INSTINCT, there's been a upsurge in the relatively new genre of "Erotic Thriller". Video store shelves are packed with these unrated, straight-to-video raunchfests. All you need is a generic suspenser, then punctuate the plot with some steamy sex scenes that go slightly beyond an R-rating. There's NIGHT EYES 1 and 2, INNER SANCTUM, BODY OF INFLUENCE---the list goes on far too long, considering that they're chunks of cheese that would never see the insides of a VCR if not for some washed-up starlet baring all, such as Tanya Roberts. Since they're all virtual clones of each other in terms of style, content and flesh-peddling, I figure if I review one I've reviewed 'em all. And my choice may be one of the dumbest of the whole sorry lot...The predictable plot revolves around The Rapunzel Murders—a series of killings perpetrated by a lady who dons a long blonde wig and while screwing her date, sticks a gun into his mouth and blows his brains onto the pillow. Ed O'Ross stars as Detective Penucci, a pug-faced cop who's always breaking the rules to get the job done (gosh, I've never seen THAT character before, have you?). After a handful of 'wacky' police procedural vignettes, Ed encounters a gorgeous young woman played by Robey, the looker from the ol' FRIDAY THE 13TH television series. So amidst the stale investigation and Penucci's bathetic angst about his estranged daughter (stuck in to make the character sympathetic. It doesn't), the guy begins shitting Robey—who may or may not have hidden secrets. All this is real believable crapola, eh? This middle-aged, spare-tired cop with a face like Sgt. Snorkel breaking bed springs with this drop-dead gorgeous, 20-year-old sexpot. And the most laughable twist? It turns out that Robey is too perverse for Penucci, because she's into biting, scratching and all that "weird shit". Gimme a fuckin' break! As for the mystery, the scripter tosses in abused children in an attempt to give it social relevance, but it just comes off as p.c. sleaze. The whole movie's as bland as oatmeal, and nobody with an iota of intelligence will care about the outcome. Nevertheless, Robey is hot, especially when she gets to stretch her acting talents by having multiple orgasms with this hairy-butted dirtbag. She's the only reason I continued watching this brainless time-waster.

JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT (1968). Thanks to Joe Bob Briggs' wondrous series, THE SLEAZIEST MOVIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, some of the most obscure endeavors from Herschell Gordon Lewis' oeuvre are finally accessible to the public (whether the public wants 'em or not). And this penny-ante production is one of his wackiest, because instead of deluging the audience with groundbreaking gore or sex, Herschell gives us teenage rebellion at its most economical. Basically, the entire flick consists of following a pack of young punks on their quest for cheap thrills and property damage. And the moral of the movie is that kids, when left to their own fertile imaginations, will always turn to crime, sex and KMart fashions. There's virtually no plot—just snippets of anti-social behavior, haphazardly stitched together, as a White Mustang convertible full of slow-witted guys and slutty chicks tour the town, making trouble. And the film gets started a bunch of party-crazed kids trash their house, set the curtains on fire, and (now that they've turned into mindless brutes) beat the furniture to pieces with sticks! They're so fuckin' mean they'll set fire to a pregnant woman's newspaper while she's reading it! And I was on the floor when they got around to tormenting

a crippled guy by poking at him with his own crutches, and tossing a woman's baby in garbage! No gore, no nudity, but still one of Lewis' most entertaining patchworks, because the guy certainly knew how to pander to his drive-in audience. Anytime the story slows, Herschell has the kids destroy another roomful of garage sale furniture—one of 'em conveniently armed with an axe for just such an occurrence. Plus, I'm sure teen viewers enjoyed the fact that the cops are even more stupid and vile than the j.d.'s. A dab of (unnecessary) morality is crammed into the proceedings when Doug, the town's nice kid, takes the law into his own hands after these malcontent miscreants go TOO DAMNED FAR! Like all of H.G.L.'s other pics, this one is utterly inept (just wait until you see the pathetically choreographed brawls!), complete with a budget that makes Roger Corman seem opulent, an all-amateur cast of local cretins, and a tendency toward tedium. But when a movie is THIS anti-social and arrogant, I guess you can overlook niceties such as pacing, motivation and technique. It's utterly ridiculous mind-sewage, crammed with laughs.



NOSFERATU IN VENICE (1987). Even though it stars the late great Klaus Kinski, this film is in no way a sequel to Werner Herzog's grande retelling of the legend. But this Italian-lensed vampire pic is still worth a look, primarily because nasty ol' Klaus is always good for an icy stare or a laugh, and though the credits list Augusto Caminito as the director, rumor has it that Kinski himself actually lensed much of it (but if you recall Kinski's caustic biography, ALL I NEED IS LOVE, the guy took credit for all of Herzog's films too)...This surprisingly opulent tale brings the vampire tale to the present day, with (embarrassed-looking) Christopher Plummer playing a Venice vampire hunter, and horror film whore Donald Pleasence as a priest who hires him on. While in a dank basement they stumble across a sealed casket which contains the body of Nosferatu, and even though the set-up is a tad lugubrious, once this ancient bloodsucker erupts from his tomb during a seance, the flick picks up speed. Kinski, with his fangs and white, scraggly hair, looks more like a Morlock than a vampire (a distinct change from the bald, rat-like figure he cut in Herzog's interpretation). The moment Klaus appears, the film comes together, because not only does he get the best moments (bending

metal crucifixes with his hand, getting an impractical shotgun blast in the chest, or tossing priests to their deaths), but his deep eyes can convey more pain and loneliness than any other actor on the planet. After a few obligatory flashbacks to Nosferatu's past, we get to the important business of Kinski falling for perhaps the only virgin in all of Italy. And instead of biting her neck, this vampire starts by ripping off her nightgown and fondling her breasts (hey, the guy might be undead, but at least he's not an idiot). The age old vampire lore is twisted around a bit for this entry, with religion and crosses and all that hokey useless against Klaus, and the only thing that can destroy pasty-faced Kinski is true love. Unfortunately, the film's never terrifying, suspenseful, or even too fascinating. Sure, it's great to see Klaus as the Count again, but all the other characters are flat. And though nicely filmed, with a few startling compositions, it primarily hangs on Kinski's superb presence and natural depth. Without him, this would've been instantly relegated into the Euro-trash bin.

EMMANUELLE 5 (1986/1992). The Emmanuelle T&A series has always been a bore to me. Euro-sleaze which was too tediously dainty to be truly erotic, and which got progressively less steamy and more silly as the series progressed. In fact it was in Part 4, when Sylvia Kristal was getting too long in the tooth and heavy in stretch marks to continue doffing her duds, that the producers wrote a head-to-toe plastic surgery overhaul into the script, and replaced her with a lithe 20 year old. But **EMMANUELLE 5** is without question the most fabulous laff riot of them all! A hilarious trashfest of near epic proportions. And speaking of epic proportions, the primary reason for this fleshfest's success lies in the casting of celluloid jism princess Monique Gabrielle in the title role. Ms. Gabrielle manages to make even the worst penny-ante dreck (**DEATHSTALKER II**, **EVIL TOONS**) easy on the eyes, with her fabulous build and self-mocking sense of humor keeping any production afloat. Adding to the fun, the movie's credits list two directors at the helm—a mind-boggling tag team of arthouse Pole-expatriate Walerian Borowczyk (**IMMORAL TALES [SC#4]**, **THE BEAST**) and Z-movie shit-meister Steve Barnett (**HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD II**). In truth, what the financiers did was to take Walerian's unfathomable '86 excursion into Emmanuelle's libido, and years later, slap in some extra padding to make it releasable to slobbering U.S. video perverts. The result is incomprehensibly asinine, but no one in search of the female form will be disappointed. Completely jettisoning any old pretentiousness, **PART 5** is rooted in pure rotgut. For this installment, the blonde, beautiful Emmanuelle is an international film star and the cause celebre of the French Riviera. In fact, the gal's so popular with her fans that after a screening of her bombastic new film at Cannes, her public literally tears all her clothes off in a lustful feeding frenzy. She's saved from pneumonia by a cute U.S. businessman (would you believe a doorknob manufacturer?), and after some random public indecency and a lengthy writhing sequence, the "plot" (I use the term loosely) emerges. You see, Prince Rajid, the Arab potentate of the island of Banglajistan, has fallen for Emmanuelle's D-cup ticket-sellers, and when she visits his homeland for the premiere of her new pic, **LOVE EXPRESS**, she's turned into another hank of hair in his harem. Of course, Emmanuelle

heads up the escape from Towelheadland—saving all the topless young Valley Damsels from the Prince's massive army (which consists of a dozen extras in Gunga Din ware). It's forehead-slapping foolishness from beginning to end, but it's all pretty well filmed, which I'll give Borowczyk credit for, since Barnett has yet to prove that he can even direct his own bowel movement. 70 minutes of mindless, entertainingsleaze, held together by Ms. Gabrielle's arousing charms.

DESADE (1969). First off, do NOT go into this flick expecting to get any insights into the life or works of the jolly ol' Marquis. And don't let the X-rating fool you, because it's tame stuff. What you get is a preposterous, drive-in level romp through (so-called) debauchery, and though the title character is the Marquis DeSade, the film has as much to do with reality as Soderburgh's recent **KAFKA**, or endless other screen bios. Produced by American-International, this psychedelic sexual hodgepodge is more like a Bondage & Domination variation of **THE TRIP**, following the same type of fragmented narrative and bulldozer symbolism (not a huge surprise, because although Cy Enfield is listed as director, Roger Corman supposedly aided in much of the production), lashed together by a few vague script hunks from the pen of Richard Matheson. The movie's major fault lies in the casting though, with Keir Dullea (winner of the Mr. Bland Award for 1969) stuffed into an ill-fitting period costume and giving us a lukewarm, pony-tailed DeSade. Dullea was hot off his long gig in Kubrick's 2001, and probably jumped at the opportunity to work with filmmakers who print after only ONE take (not to mention, all the nude chicks), but he never gets into the spirit of the piece, instead looking likes he's simply on heavy medication. The "plot" (ha!)

primarily has the Marquis experiencing different moments in his life as he roams through a huge, cobwebby castle. And speaking of cobwebby, John Huston is also along for the ride as DeSade's crotchety uncle. We get childhood memories of spankings; a forced marriage to a prim stiff; his imprisonment; paternal traumas; and every few minutes a 'racy' seduction scene is tossed in to keep the viewer barely awake (Oooh, he's tying up a lady and whipping her butt...Big fuckin' deal). This makes so little sense that they should've gotten Ken Russell to direct the damned thing—at least he would've had fun with all the play-within-the-play bullshit and fetishes. All Enfield does is tape red gels over the lights in order to devote anything mildly perverse, and the surrealistic orgy scenes consist of hiring some naked extras, getting them soused in the boudoir, and then spinning the camera about feverishly as they paw each other, while bongo drums play in the background (Bongos?!). Lavish, frenzied and utterly ludicrous, it's easy to see what the filmmakers were trying for though—thinking man's erotica which swirls together events from the Marquis' life and fantasies, as seen through his mad mind. What exactly is reality? And what isn't? And could all this be just a delusion from DeSade's jail cell? Or simply a strange, crappy movie posing as arthouse fodder? The heavy-handed, dime-store psychobabble is almost unbearable, and though the ladies are lovely and the orgies of destruction quite indulgent, the film is NEVER arousing. And in the long run this murky melodrama does a disservice to the good name of the Marquis DeSade.



BURN, WITCH, BURN [a.k.a. Night of the Eagle] (1961). Based on the fine Fritz Leiber novel, *CONJURE WIFE*, and adapted by Charles Beaumont and Richard Matheson, this is certainly NOT your normal drive-in schlock, despite the fact A.I.P. picked it up for U.S. distribution. Forged in the same subtle mold as Tourneur's classic *CURSE OF THE DEMON*, this intriguing British tale stars Janet Blair as a college professor's missus who seems to be a league with supernatural forces. By day, she hosts faculty get-togethers like the perfect spouse, but unbeknownst to her staid husband (Peter Wyngarde), after dark she begins working her black magic and furthering hubby's career by putting spells on his competition. Wyngarde first gets suspicious she's been dabbling with darker forces when he discovers a supply of potions and spiders hidden in her underwear drawer, and being a total skeptic, he tosses out all her occult accoutrements. Bad move, Einstein, because soon his professional life begins crashing around his ears, people being acting strangely (as if "something came over them"), and Blair gets antsy because all her magical protection is gone. Things eventually get so ominous (cut to: sudden lightning storms and gusting winds) that Wyngarde has to put aside his academic beliefs and search for the supernatural solution to these phenomena. The kickass ending is both suspenseful and fantastic, with a giant stone eagle coming to life (hence the original U.K. title) and attacking Wyngarde. And you've gotta love the vengeful finale...Though occasionally so low key that it approaches tedium, and imply directed by Sidney Hayers, the performers are straight-faced and the script is top-notch. Building suspense layer by layer, while avoiding cheap shock tactics in favor of good old fashioned storytelling.

LA NUIT DES TRAQUEES / NIGHT OF THE CRUEL SACRIFICE (1980).

French director Jean Rollin's films could never be accused of narrative coherence or believability, but he certainly has an eye for unsettling, erotic terror and the female form, as witnessed in early works like *LE FRISSON DES VAMPIRES* or *REQUIEM POUR UN VAMPIRE*. But enough about the director, because the real reason I grabbed this flick was to check out its star, Brigitte Lahaie, one of Europe's hottest exploitation queens. Beginning her celluloid career with some hardcore pics, this blond beauty went onto a number of features with Rollin (*FASCINATION*) and Jess Franco (*ISLAND WOMEN*, *FACELESS*, *DARK MISSION*), not to mention a small, but steamy role as a whore in *HENRY AND JUNE*. This bizarre mystery is one of her earliest showcases. Brigitte is first glimpsed running down a dark country road in nothing but her nightgown, and she's picked up by a handsome young man (who she proceeds to fuck 'til dry). Poor amnesia-ridden Brigitte doesn't remember who she was escaping from, and in fact, her brain is such a swiss cheese that she's unable to remember ANYTHING for more than a few moments. Filling in a few answers, a grey-haired Doctor and his prim femme assistant soon whisk the dazed cutie back to a high-rise apartment/prison and her equally absent-minded brunette roommate. (Two gorgeous French roommates who can't remember the last guy they had sex with, much less their own names? Sounds like an upcoming FOX sitcom to me!) The entire high-rise is packed with equally confused mental cases, in addition to dehumanizing Doctors with guns, a bald

orderly who molests the women, plus patients and guards who matter-of-factly commit murder. All these creepy occurrences are slowly explained, and even though the answers are sorta hokey, Rollin keeps the viewer effectively disoriented with his eerie music, camerawork and sterile sets. Plus there's ample comic relief due to the fact that all the female cast members are continually climbing out of their clothes for no apparent reason. Rollin's heavy hand works well in combination with the dour storyline, and he wins my admiration by going with a nihilistic, yet romantic finale that's the perfect caper...As for our lead, Ms. Lahaie indeed makes for a sensuous,

sympathetic ingenue, even though this role primarily calls for her to be vulnerable and vapid. One thing is certain—Brigitte brings plenty of enthusiasm to her acting (especially when she's straddling the male lead) and her bedazzling presence keeps the movie from being simple stylish Euro-dreck.

KISS ME QUICK [a.k.a. Dr. Breedlove] (1964).

This nudie quickie takes the prize as one of the strangest skinflicks of all time. Outlandish sci-fi sexploitation featuring a visitor from the planet Doopiter in the galaxy Buttless. Going by the name of Sterilox (and according to the cast listing, played by "Fatty Beltbuckle"), he's on Earth to learn about the subservient female species. His first destination is the laboratory of the horny, disfigured Dr. Breedlove, who experiments on busty female guinea pigs using his Sex Machine (which makes the dames do slow stripteases as Laszlo Kovacs' camera lingers on every pore. Tough job you had there, Laszlo!). Sterilox appears in the middle of Breedlove's paper-mache castle wearing a high-tech colander on his head, rubber kitchen gloves on his hands, and doing an overweight Stan Laurel imitation. Breedlove's no better, with his dark shades, pasty make-up, and a bacon-greased hairstyle that predates *The Cure* by over two decades. Together, the two dim-witted males

crack creaky jokes ("All your specimens seem to be homebodies." "Precisely. They're the type of bodies you want to take home." Groan.) and peek in on his nude subjects at play in the catacombs. Breedlove's plan is to create the perfect submissive sex object, and we certainly get a lot of garter belts, black lingerie and cellulite, with several of the ladies looking a tad long in the tooth and heavy on the make-up. There are times you'd almost think the director went down the street, grabbed a few old whores from various doorways, and paid 'em a sawbuck apiece to shake their tits at the camera. But every time you might think the flick has fallen into typical T&A, it stuns you with magnificent choreography (topless chicks dancing in place, fondling beakers of dry ice), stunning set pieces (three broads frolicking in the doc's "pool", which is the size of a large bathtub and filled with 8 inches of water), and surrealistic episodes (visits from a decrepit looking Dracula, and a transsexual Frankenstein's monster!). I promise, you will NOT believe this movie! 67 minutes of astounding trash, and hands down winner of the Females As Meat Sweepstakes.

HELLZAPOPPIN (1941). Universal Home Video seems to be re-releasing every B-movie in their vaults, so why haven't they let us rediscover this early, surrealist gem from the comedy team of Ole Olson and Chic Johnson? ANY movie that opens with a comedy/dance routine set in Hell (complete with dozens of devils jabbing



sinner with pitchforks and roasting young ladies on BBQ spits) is cool in my book! And the moment our stocky pair of vaudevillians step on screen they take sledgehammers to the fourth wall—talking directly into the camera; asking Louie the projectionist (a pre-Stooges Shemp Howard) to rerun parts of the movie they want to see again; or running off the set to argue with the director and sign autographs. In the first reel alone, the rapid-fire visual gags go beyond anything The Marx Brothers ever created, and its twisting of cinematic reality puts it in a league with SHERLOCK JR. and HEAD. Unfortunately, things get a little more sedate when a plot is grafted on, with Olsen & Johnson playing prop men who're hired by a society dame to help set up a musical revue on her palatial estate. A romance between two of the supporting rich clods is leaden, and everything comes to a screeching halt the moment anyone begins to sing. But the cast works overtime. A young Martha Raye (who was even uglier half a century ago than she is now) co-stars as a man-hungry old maid; Hugh Herbert is a master of disguise detective; Elisha Cook Jr. puts away his hoodlum act to play the movie's timid scriptwriter; and Ole and Chic, who starred in a variation of the show on Broadway, demonstrate their expert timing. Fortunately, in between musical numbers, director H.C. Potter's flair for absurdity wins out. For instance, a fight in the projection booth knocks the film's image out of frame (a joke ripped off years later in DUCK AMUCK); an incorrect reel change suddenly lands the cast in the middle of a western; and the flick might well contain the first CITIZEN KANE joke (Ole and Chic come across a "Rosebud" labeled sled, and comment "I thought they burnt that thing"). Plus, in the end, the Big Show falls apart with the sudden appearance of sneezing powder, flypaper stuck to the dancers' feet, a wood saw replacing the cellist's bow, a grizzly bear, and even Frankenstein's monster! Though inconsistent, HELLZA-POPPIN is continually inventive and far ahead of its time. Over 50 years after it was made, it hasn't lost its ability to surprise the viewer.

GAMERA SUPER MONSTER (1980). What the hell is a Gamera, you ask?! If you were a fan of Japanese Monster flicks, you'd know he's the celluloid world's most incredible, giant, fire-shooting, flying turtle! First conceived by Daiei Studios in the mid-'60s in an attempt to compete with Toho's Godzilla factory, Gamera went on to star in seven earlier laff-riot epics (and most of 'em could only be truly appreciated by a nine-year-old mentality---or an adult who's just finished off a case of Genesee Cream Ale). Like GODZILLA'S REVENGE though, this particular entry was merely an excuse to recycle loads of cool battle scenes from all the earlier films—a "Best Of" pic that's lashed together by a ridiculous storyline involving superheroiners in skin-tight suits (hubba hubba). Beginning with a bouncy theme song (dubbed "The Gamera Polka") and badly air-brushed spaceship illos, we're given the gist of the plot: A trio of Asian alien gals drive around in an extraterrestrial VW bus, taking on the job of Protectors of Earth (not to mention, nursemaids to annoying li'l oriental rugrats). Meanwhile, an evil Space Bitch (not to be confused with the goodnik Space Cuties) plans to take over our planet, aided by equally-cranky giant rubbery monsters. Thank goodness Gamera is around with his portfolio of old film clips!! There's plenty of city-stomping and kick-ass action from past entries, as our favorite atomic

turtle bashes the shit out of his old foes, Gyaos, Viras, Jiger, Barugon, and Zigra (an armored flying swordfish who, in a jaw-droppingly stooopid sequence, is played by Gamera like a xylophone). It's wall-to-wall destruction (as long as the cannibalized footage holds out), though a little redundant if you've seen the original flicks. All with an I.Q. level that makes most Godzilla movies look like Yukio Mishima. Unfortunately, it always cuts back to the lead brat, who lugs the occasionally miniaturized heroines around in a bag, while crassly promoting comic books and corporate sponsors at every turn. The special effects range from crude (terrible fuckin' mattes) to surrealist-ically cheezy (when an Aurora Kit helicopter is sheared in half by a laser beam, and the people tumble out!), but after a while even adolescents might find the thing reprehensibly childish. Totally asinine swill, but for besotted Giant Monster fanatics, I can't imagine better fare for a low-braincelled evening.

COCKSUCKER BLUES (1972). Wanna watch a rock film where the band is so blasted out of their skulls that they probably don't even remember making it? This documentary on The Rolling Stones has been in limbo for over two decades, after Mick and the boys got a look at the finished project and blew what few brain cells they had remaining. And it's no wonder why, since director Robert Frank and photographer Daniel Seymour caught everything on-camera, blemishes and all (unlike the simultaneously filmed LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE ROLLING STONES, which was a matter-of-fact concert flick). A lame disclaimer says it's all "fictional", but any halfwit would know better...The movie mixes b&w handheld footage with color concert bits, and lashes it all together for artsy effect. There's jamming in the studio, rolling joints for the crew, interviews with ticket scalpers, and trips on the party plane, complete with roadies stripping nubile groupies on camera. All the while, the Stones simply look sweaty, stoned and stupid, while the rest of their entourage comes off like a pack of drug-addled bozos. The strange thing about the movie is, considering its notorious reputation, you'd expect the Stones to be at their peak of perversity. But instead, even diehard fans will be pulled into a coma by the flick's wandering, deadening pace. It's the roadies and hangers-on who are the biggest sleazebags, while the band just seems kinda bored and apathetic about the whole scene. While naked groupies are masturbating on their hotel room bed, Mick sits in the next room, obliviously playing poker, and even

their attempts at cliched anarchy seem tired (you can imagine them thinking, "Do we have to toss another TV out the window?"). Fans of Incomplete Sentences will be in heaven throughout, and Jagger's so brain-burnt on heroin that he's intellectually stymied when Room Service asks him to choose what type of fruit he wants to eat. But the most incredible moment is when Keith shoots up and promptly turns into a snoozing invertebrate. When it comes to the music though, it doesn't get any better, with kickin' renditions of "Brown Sugar" and "Midnight Rambler", not to mention Stevie Wonder on keyboards for "Uptight", then joining Mick on vocals for "Satisfaction"...Including cameo appearances by Truman Capote, Andy Warhol and Dick Cavett as backstage parasites. The pic is a ragged, but perceptive document which manages to capture the Rolling Stones in all their skag-induced lethargy. Difficult, but essential viewing.



SANTA CLAUS (1960). Rene Cardona Sr. will always live in the hearts of Mexploitation fanatics for romps such as *THE BRAINIAC* and *DOCTOR OF DOOM*, but this Xmas present is one of his most jaw-dropping accomplishments. Second only to *THE CHRISTMAS THAT ALMOST WASN'T* for its record number of holiday recyclings, producer K. Gordon Murray spent the '60s tossing this damned thing into Xmas matinees and raking in the simoleons. But it's a lot weirder than it seems on the surface, because this Mexico-lensed, badly-dubbed (is there any other kind of dubbing?) Santa flick features vibrant visuals and a wild villain in the form of a red-flanneled devil, complete with horns, goatee and rubbery Spock ears. Santa is still the fat, vapid ol' coot we all wanna kick in the solar plexus though (considering Cardona's wrestling background, I think he should've tried making *SANTO CLAUS*), and for much of the flick we're stuck watching him waddling around his Toy Shop as his diabetes-inducing, multi-national helpers mingle about. Instead of The North Pole, Santa's workshop is on some other planet entirely, and with assistance from the bumbling Merlin the Magician, wind-up reindeer, and a magic observatory filled with cool-looking inventions, Santa's ready for his yearly Rugrat Routine. The only thing that can stop him is a devil who's sent from Hades to corrupt all the children of the earth, starting with a trio of li'l leather-jacketed thugs-in-training and culminating with a vomitably-cute urchin whose only wish is to own a dolly of her very own (retch). The devil follows Santa from house to house trying to thwart this holiday hooley—even getting the Fat One treed by a guard dog at one point—but we all know that Good always triumphs over Evil (at least in cheesy kid's flicks). Even while the deadening pace and rotgut sentimentality has you cringing, there's always a strange tilt to the proceedings, particularly in Cardona's hyper-intense color photography and sets... You'll definitely want to chug down some Christmas Spirits before sitting through this sugar-coated pabulum.

KAMIKAZE (1986). I don't think this French satire received even a nominal U.S. release. It's an odd wish-fulfillment fantasy co-scripted and produced by Luc Besson (*LA FEMME NIKITA*), and since first time director Didier Grousset began as an assistant of Besson's, the film's clean, stark stylishness is no surprise. When lovable clod Michel Galabru is fired from his genius-level electronics lab job, he immediately goes into seclusion—vegetating alone in front of the TV until he can no longer stomach the mindless barrage of cathode ray rotgut. But just when the guy's ready to be carted away to the looney bin, he has a sudden flash of brilliance—a solution to all his frustrations. He simply invents a futuristic-looking device which is capable of murdering people who are appearing live on his TV screen! If a newscaster riles his nerves, or if he disagrees with some vapid talkshow host's opinions, Galabru aims his high-tech video cannon at them and kills them via the airwaves, by blowing a large, nasty hole right through 'em! Of course, these mysterious deaths don't sit well with the police, and in a parallel storyline, detective Richard Bohringer (*DIVA*) tries to convince his superiors of his own crazy (but correct) theory about the murders. The film's second half takes on darker hues when Galabru goes even further insane, decking himself out in Japanese kamikaze garb and killing anyone in his way. The entire tale is somewhat half-baked, and it shifts gears so often that you get the feeling the filmmakers didn't

know what kind of movie they wanted—a standard policier, a black comedy, or a twisted psychological drama. They even throw in some gory violence for cheap shock effect. Plus, all the officials and cops are such a bland bunch, that even though Galabru is a gross, irritable killer, he winds up being infinitely more likable than the good guy dullards. A wonderful premise (don't you wish you had one of those weapons after an evening of channel surfing?), a cast of pros, and a relatively big budget can't hide the fact that director Grousset seems lost without a compass, retreating to safe, tedious territory whenever the plot begins getting too bizarre. Not bad, just disappointing.

ABBY (1974). William Girdler was always the poor man's answer to Larry Cohen. A B-movie director who could pump out a wide range of entertaining, eclectic work, but never broke out of the schlock niche. Girdler lacked Cohen's subversive subtexts and in-your-face style though, and was unable to transcend his budget limitations. In his brief career (Girdler died in '78, at the age of 30) he embraced supernatural hokum in *THE MANITOU*, monsters on the rampage in *GRIZZLY*, hillbilly gore in *THREE ON A MEATHOOK*, plus the blaxploitation boom in *SHEBA*, *BABY* and this—one of his all-time worst (yet strangely, most fondly remembered) films. A blatant Black EXORCIST rip-off that actually tries to take itself seriously! William Marshall (*BLACULA*) stars as an archaeologist who, while on a dig in Nigeria, accidentally unleashes the spirit of Eshu, a god of rampant sexuality. This demonic force travels to the other side of the globe

and decides to possess the body of Abby (Carol Speed), a black minister's adorable wife. Soon Abby is having hysterical spells in the middle of Sunday Mass, foaming at the mouth, hilariously berating her hubbie in bed, and turning into a gravel-voiced nympho. When her family tries to hospitalize Abby, she simply tosses the doctors around like they were low-paid stunt men, so they call in the last resort—Marshall, who's without doubt the funkiest exorcist on the entire planet. Marshall tracks Abby down to a local bar, where she's beating the bejesus out of some veloured Brothers, and (in what is arguably one of the silliest scenes in grindhouse history) performs a full-scale exorcism on her in the middle of this demolished barroom. Of course, it's difficult to take any of this religious hooley seriously when there's a big-assed disco ball hangin' above their heads. Or when the astounding make-up effects amount to glueing heavy eyebrows onto Abby and shoving

albino contact lenses in her eyes. The production looks like it was slapped together in record time, with Marshall giving it the only iota of class. Speed also warbles the syrupy "My Soul is a Witness" (which she wrote). Good for a few laughs with an equally stewed audience, but also more fun to read about than actually sit through.

SMALL GAUGE SHOTGUN (1992; Peeling Eyeball, P.O. Box 460472, San Francisco, CA 94146). This 90 minute compilation features the work of indie filmmakers Danny Plotnick and Jim Sikora. The title is an apt one, since the scattershot shorts range anywhere from the sick and confused, to the more introspective and stylized—and it's well worth a look. It begins with a quartet from Plotnick, each one riotously ripping away at a different niche of uniquely American culture. "Flip About Flip" is a three-minute look at how Flip Wilson affected a variety of subjects; "Death Sled II: Steel Belted Romeos"



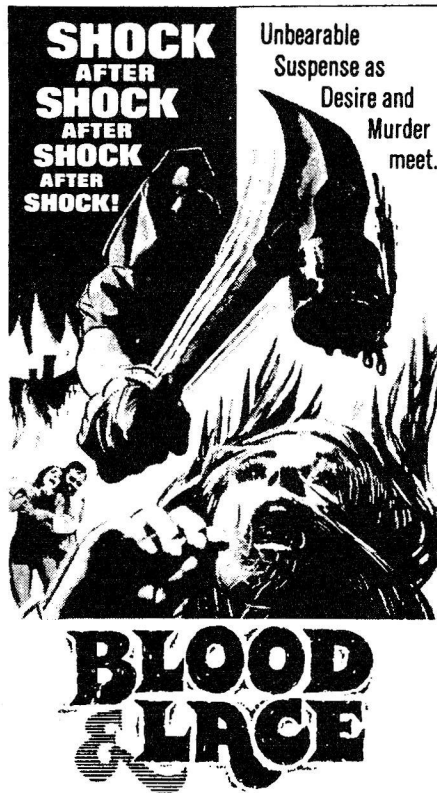
has a pair of goombas in a hot rod abusing some poor schmo at a traffic light; and the slackeresque "Dumbass From Dundas" features two burn-out metalheads who're dumped in the middle of the desert, and are so annoying that they can't find anyone to give 'em a ride home. But the best of Plotnick's batch is the caustic "Pillow Talk", which is so damned close to home (and hilarious), that all I could do was roll with the punches. Co-writer Laura Rosow stars as a tormented tenement dweller—a young woman who screams at her nightmarish neighbors for waking her up with their orgasmic moans. After a while she's literally ripping at her walls, swilling back booze, and going unquietly insane (I think I'm in love!), as her hellish existence gets the best of her. It's a shrill, sick-assed slice of urban reality, and Plotnick's strength lies in his expert capturing of the deadbeat edges of society, plus a wise-ass eye for detail. I loved his work...Unfortunately, the second half of the video never lives up to the first. Sure, Jim Sikora's films are more tripped-out and stylized, but they lack the bite of razored reality that Plotnick's pieces revel in. "Terminal Hotel" is your standard underground assault, tackling the Big Theme of nuclear power. "Bring Me the Head of Geraldo Rivera" has a great title, but limps along with one brief joke. "Stagefright Chameleon" is an over-the-top, surrealistic voyage for two derelicts, and its high Confusion Level makes this fun after several stiff drinks. Lastly comes "Love, After the Walls Close In", based on Bukowski's story "Reunion", but it's just a pale shadow of the real thing. Never capturing the author's rotgut, beershit truth, it instead turns his prose into the banality of ordinary existence...Certainly a mixed bag. But there are plenty of highly recommended moments, plus an exhilaratingly savage sense of humor at work behind each gent's camera.

PRETTY MAIDS ALL IN A ROW (1971). This is probably the biggest piece of sexist schlock ever released by M.G.M., and that's saying PLENTY! Giving low grade voyeurs a chance to ogle a barrage of early '70s micro-mini-skirts, bra-less blouses, nubile high school lasses, and Hollywood stars who were trying so hard to be trendy that they never realized how asinine they looked. With French fleshmeister Roger Vadim as director (his first U.S. assignment) and Gene Roddenberry behind the prurient script, this strange alliance resulted in one of the biggest hoots of that year, and an embarrassment for everyone involved. In other words, this flick is a classic piece of campy trash!...Set in an average American high school, the randy faculty and student body are at the heart of the nonsensical storyline. Featuring Rock Hudson as a hip, sexy, hetero guidance counselor/football coach named Tiger, who's boffing every young thing under the guise of psychological "testing"; Angie Dickinson as the curvaceous new English teacher; and John David Carson as the lone virgin on campus, who's constantly running to the boys' room in order to jerk-off at the slightest cleavage. Of course, every girl is a gorgeous nympho (just like in everyone's high school, right?). But when these "pretty maids" begin turning up murdered, Detective Telly Savalas is called in (aided by post-STAR TREK unemployables, James "Scotty" Doohan and William "Squire of Gothos" Campbell). The leggy corpses begin piling up while (in various subplots) Angie bares her all for a student's extra-credit assignment, and Rock flashes peace signs and struts around in a ridiculous dashiki! For moments, the film almost achieves a level of black comedy reminiscent of HEATHERS,

with its juxtaposition of sex, death, and then-modern culture gone rancid—but it never follows through with its dissection, instead going for easy sleaze with all the subtlety of an old LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE. The level of humor is based on erection jokes or double entendres, but the nostalgia quotient is so high (free love, bell bottoms, big pork chop sideburns) that you won't be able to keep a straight face through an entire scene. Roddy McDowall and Keenan Wynn stumble through this tease-fest in supporting roles, with Joy Bang, Brenda Sykes and Margaret Markov as a few of the wall-to-wall femmes. Oh, did I forget to mention that on top of everything else, the title song, "Chilly Winds", is sung by The Osmonds?! Gag.

BLOOD AND LACE (1970). Gloria Grahame goes the route of so many other past Oscar winners—right into cheapjack horror-land—with this hackneyed psycho romp revolving around a masked intruder who enjoys beating folks to death with the claw end of a hammer. It even begins with the ol' killer-eye-view as he stalks his first victims, but you have to keep in mind that back in '70, this technique was a lot fresher. And though the flick's unrelenting, matter-of-fact depravity and despair might not be your idea of toe-tapping entertainment, it wields a sick edge that was years ahead of its time. Melody Patterson stars as Ellie, a petite blond with no family, no friends and no acting potential. The daughter of a murdered whore, her life's a paranoid mess since she's worried that her mom's killer is still on the loose. But it only gets worse when Ellie moves into a state-run home for problemteens, which has its own fair share of sadism, torture, rape, and meat cleaver-tossing guards. "Detention" is actually a torture chamber where kids are trussed up and left to dehydrate, the kitchen freezer is chockfull of "missing" residents, and Grahame keeps the teens barely alive so she can collect the \$150 per month she gets for each. Since the staff is such a bunch of white trash misfits, the viewer continually hopes the killer will show up and crack open a few skulls, but it's not until the final 15 minutes that we get our wish—when he stalks the hallways in a bald, putty-faced mask and pre-grunge flannel shirt. Grahame looks gaunt and haggard, playing a complete harpy; Vic Tayback is a greasy detective; and the personable Ms. Patterson avoids the vapid heroine-on-the-run stereotype. Bluntly directed by Philip Gilbert, the pic was obviously cut to get its PG rating, but it's still surprisingly repellant. Complete with a sleazy denouement, this is by no means a good film, but for schlock-mavens it touches a delightfully nasty nerve.

KUNG FU RASCALS (1991; Film Threat Video). Director Steve Wang's loving tribute to Hong Kong chopsocky comedies mixes monsters, mysticism, martial arts, and plenty of mugging for the camera. And the results are best appreciated by filmgoers already familiar with the joys of HK action cinema, although in comparison to the real thing, this looks like a cheap clone, mixing second-rate thrills with fourth-rate Three Stooges-style antics. Steve Wang, Troy Fromin and Johnnie Saiko star as the title trio of kung fu clods, and they're thrown headfirst into a murky world of pig people, reptile men, and a raspy monster warlord named The Bamboo Man who wants to rule the world. It seems that this warlord dude needs to get his paws on some crummy magical stone, so he sends his stinky minions to retrieve it from (guess who?) our bumbling heroes. These Rascals



spend the movie roaming the countryside, pummeling ninjas and indulging in booger, piss and fart jokes aplenty (which shows you the highbrow level of humor). Despite several dead spots, the filmmakers manage to achieve a ragtag stylishness, with many moments of cool fight choreography. But nevertheless no matter how badly I wanted to like the flick, its intentional stupidity kept getting in the way. I was constantly bored by the trio's slapstick schtick and incessant whining, and even though I'm always a sucker for cheap, crass humor, here the jokes are laced with a self-conscious smirkiness that left me cold. What DID impress me were the special effects which, considering its tiny budget, are pretty damned amazing. The finale even has a full-scale battle between two MAJIN-style behemoths. Obviously director Wang grew up on these much-loved HK pics as a child, and his homage is aimed at that same age level. But stick around through the end credits, because you're gonna LOVE the ultra-cheezy "Kung Fu Rascal Theme", which retells the whole damn plot in song!

NIGHT OF THE BLOOD BEAST (1958). Sure, this movie's terrible. But it's got two things going for it. (1) It's only 65 minutes long, and (2) it features the first earth man to be impregnated by an alien being! So if you can ignore all its minor faults (the flick's dull, cheap and badly acted), you'll discover the nuttiest concept to emerge from a '50s B-movie...A U.S. rocketship crash lands in a field (though from the minimal number of dents it received, it looks more like it was sideswiped by a Buick) and its pilot—the first man into space—is seemingly dead. Or is he? The guy's got no heartbeat, but pretty soon he's up off his slab, joining the rest of the inept cast members (including Ed Nelson as brilliant scientist) in an investigation of why he's not colder than a mackerel. It seems that an alien "thing" (to use the highly technical term) has infiltrated the pilot's bloodstream. In doing so, the creature shares its own intelligence and the minds of its

previous victims with the host body, while using the host as a breeding ground for new lil' monsters! Cool! Too bad nothing much else happens for most of the film. All we get is talk, talk, talk, and though some drippy violence is alluded to ("half his head's gone"), the pic is never as gruesome as the ad makes it seem. At the very end, the Blood Beast appears in the form of a creature "as big as a bear" and as cheap as four bucks worth of paper mache and peat moss. The lumpy creature (conveniently) speaks English and explains he only wants to take over the earth in order to give us humans "a better way of life". Hmm, is that a glimmer of social commentary lurking in the shadows? Maybe, but before the movie gets too cerebral

(and that wouldn't be difficult), they burn the Beast to a cinder. Directed by Bernard Kowalski (ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES, SSSSSSS), this is stultifyingly stuff, enlivened by its unique twists.

THE BEAT GENERATION [a.k.a. THIS REBEL AGE] (1959). In the tradition of the classic HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL, producer Albert Zugsmith brings us another utterly-unrealistic 'expose' into '50s youth culture. This time taking his dimwit viewers into the then-scandalous world of the beat poets and their coffee house ilk. And what a far-out cast he pulls together for the trip! We get sultry platinum

blonde hussy Mamie Van Doren; Louie Armstrong blowin' his horn and growlin' the theme song; Jackie Coogan (Uncle Fester) as a cop who has to dress up in drag for a Lovers' Lane stakeout; plus Irish McCalla (TV's SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE), Charlie Chaplin Jr.; and Vampira as a horrible free verse poetess who lugs around a pet white rat. It's just too bad that the film isn't REALLY about the beats and their lifestyle—instead it turns out to be your ordinary grade-B detective flick, hopped up with some cool cat trappings. At least Zugsmith and director Charles Haas had the good sense to pack the police plotline with lurid details. Steve Cochran stars as a misogynistic flatfoot who's after a psychopathic rapist (thoroughly hep Ray Danton) known by the terrifying moniker of "The Aspirin Kid", and he tracks him down to a sordid beatnik hangout called The Golden Scallion. Of course,

all these weird and wooly bohemians are anathemas to the square authority figures, but the viewer will undoubtedly be chuckling at the wall-to-wall slang ("You dig?" "Crazy..."), the terrible abstract artwork, the "gone" poetry, and the forehead-slapping pretentiousness which Zugsmith tries to pass off as the 'Beat Generation'. The cheesy police business slows the pic down to a crawl, and much of the time it's perched at soap opera level (especially when Cochran's wife is raped and gets pregnant—a plot twist that leads to vomitable anti-abortion rhetoric). At least the finale is wild, complete with Danton banging on his bongos as the police circle in. All in all though, this is a terrible movie full of wasted opportunities, especially in comparison to the all-time beat/horror/comedy classic, A BUCKET OF BLOOD. Excruciatingly funny at times, but only when it keeps its cameras trained on all the goateed Ginsberg 'n' Ferlinghetti wannabees.

DICK AND JANE DROP ACID AND DIE (1991; Surf Reality Productions, P.O. Box 20708, Tompkins Square, New York NY 10009-8974). From the productive East Village vidiots who gave us the hilarious HOW TO MAKE A SNUFF MOVIE [SC#4], comes another excursion into the realm of fly-by-night fun. This time around, their totally-improvised story takes the viewer into the world of L.S.D. and its nefarious effects on a pair of nice, sweet youngsters named (read the title, Einstein) Dick and Jane. Which gives the filmmakers an excuse for plenty of hand-held, tripped-out camerawork; dozens of friends gyrating spastically to colored lights while sporting tie-dyed t-shirts borrowed from their parents' wardrobes; and loads of uproarious, drug-induced nonsense. It begins when our narrator, a professorly shthead, warns us that L.S.D. can be concocted from such ordinary household items as coffee grounds, celery salt and shoe polish, and the results of such experimentation are "acid addicts on a raping spree". Dick & Jane, our naive lovebirds, begin their descend into hell by accepting a party invitation from some groovy-threaded hippies in a psychedelic VW Bug. A few laced brownies later, everyone's spacin' to trails, and since we all know that L.S.D. leads to harder stuff, pretty soon Dick & Jane are even drinking Miller Beer! Egad! The next day the duo are still flying high, seeing invisible basketballs and kissing the refrigerator goodbye. But luckily, two moronic cops are on the case, and go undercover to crash a "happening" in hopes

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OF THE

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HIDEOUTS...THE
JAZZ...THE KICKS!



**SURGING, SAVAGE ADVENTURE
AND HELLISH HORROR!**



**NIGHT OF THE
BLOOD BEAST**

of saving D & J from the diabolical fate of becoming Flower Children. Of course, the two pigs get dosed, and the result is a Bad Trip, man. One big plastic hassle that's goofy and lovable for Those Who Know. It's crammed to the rafters with ludicrous hippie banter, and everyone in the cast hits the perfect pitch of absurdity. Patrick Nimmo and C.C. Pulitzer star in the title roles; Jeff Eyres, Mavis Harris and Jennifer Babbist play the trio of Acidheads; and co-starring as the L.S.D. is that lovable Dot Candy which comes glued to long strips of paper! Kudos to director/designer Matt Mitler for this wild, top-notch indie effort.

SPEED FREAK WITH GUNS (1991). Fresh from the bowels of N.Y.C. and the twisted brainpan on underground filmmaker Joe Christ (COMMUNION IN ROOM 410 [SC#4]), comes a comically edgy, white trash portrait that provides more demented joy than any artsy dose of cinemasturbation. It's obvious, it's crude, it's sick, it's a riot! With Christ's filmmaking technique reaching a high point (this one looks like it was actually edited!), and Joe proving to be his own best actor, since he'll do just about anything on camera. The plot is simple: We follow speed freak Christ around his apartment and down city streets, as he rambles incoherently about his paranoid delusion, phonetapping, radioactive Lithium, and killing sprees from his past. He gives us a wondrous tour of the dregs of humanity (in other words, my own neighborhood), gets hilariously vomited on by a priest (in the face, no less!), and I couldn't stop laughing when, in order to hide out, Joe decides to pose as a woman! The character is so utterly fucked up that he stares in a mirror admiring this inept, pathetic excuse for a disguise, while the viewer is rolling off their chair, thinking "Hey, it's Joe Christ wearing lipstick and a dress!" Christ also gives us some grainy home movies of past crimes, like a street corner knifing by his Goth pals, and a little bathroom voyeurism, complete with sensitive commentary ("...too bad about those stretch marks. Nice looking beaver though..."). Hey, it's certainly not art, but this is entertainment of the most endearingly rancid kind. Christ is totally believable in the role—if I hadn't met the guy, I wouldn't even think he was acting—and the entire film is best appreciated if you're reeling from too much speed yourself (if not, just drink eight or nine cups of black coffee beforehand).

SATAN'S BED (1965). What a tremendous pile of shit! A prime example of '60s sexploitation, and the fact it stars a then-unknown oriental dame named Yoko Ono makes it all the more bewildering! Directed (under the pseudonym Marshall Smith) by the much-beloved Michael and Roberta Findley, this piecemeal project may not have the intense, caustic demeanor of their FLESH trilogy, but it's still pretty lewd and socially irresponsible. And chock full of guffaws whenever it cuts to Yoko in her role as a "slanty-eyed susie". The movie intercuts two equally dismal excuses for a story, and it's almost as if the pair of plots weren't even connected (not a big surprise, since much of the movie is footage from an unreleased flick called JUDAS CITY). But as '60s trenchcoat crowds know all too well, a few sleazy sequences and some imaginative editing will always pad some random film stock to feature length. Because let's be honest, who really cares if the plot's coherent when it comes to a Jugs & Thugs Fest?...Yoko stars as Ito, a mail order bride who's just

stepped off the boat (still dressed in a kimono, no less), and the viewer certainly has to stretch their beer-bloated imaginations to believe Yoko is some kind of sex object. Luckily for us all, her character doesn't speak English, so we're spared her incessant yapping—or better yet, even the remotest chance of her 'singing'. Her hubbie-to-be (a pusher) get freaked when Immigration shows up at his sex pad looking for Yoko, so Ono get bounced around to other abusive johns, until she looks so miserable (probably on and off camera), she figures out a way to escape. Of course, we all know that in real life she escaped her fate by fucking a Beatle 'til his mind turned to cottage cheese. In our alternate plot, we get a trio of perverts (including a wonderfully vicious lesbian) who play peeping tom on cellulite-caked ladies—breaking into their apartments or pulling them from their autos, striping down their victims with switchblades, and tormenting them with lewd behavior and grating soundtrack music. It's too bad this sadistic trio only pops up every 15 minutes to cause trouble and mess up some cutie, because they're the highpoint of random, irresponsible sex and violence. Without them, all you'd have are ugly, pock-faced non-actors, fly-by-night continuity, and the sole blessing that Yoko NEVER takes her clothes off.

EQUINOX (1967/70). I first caught this monster movie when I was a kid, and back then I ate the thing up. (I suspect that Sam Raimi and Don Coscarelli must've too, since it comes off like a cheezy precursor to both THE EVIL DEAD and PHANTASM.) Nowadays, the film was definitely more of an uphill struggle to endure, with its wacky production history almost more entertaining than the pic itself. You see, in 1968 producer Jack Harris bought the right to a movie called

THE EQUINOX, which was directed by Dennis Muren. At only 71 minutes, the no-budget flick was a short, but had some spectacular stop-motion effects by Jim Danforth, so Harris shot some more (badly matched) footage. And then had the typical asswipe businessman gall to stick a different director's name on the final print, which was finally released in 1970. The result is a mess all right, but also an outlandish mess. Our story is told in flashback (from a mental hospital), with those wacky Forces of Evil once again attacking young folks and leaving 'em dead or deranged. A case in point: Two couples heading up to a secluded mountain cabin to meet with a professor of theirs. When they reach their destination, they discover the cabin is destroyed, and immediately disobey TWO of the Horror Film Commandments, (1) Never accept an ancient book of evil from a crazed old hermit in a cave, and (2) If you DO accept an ancient book of evil, NEVER pry open the sealed cover. It turns out that in his spare time, the professor opened a dimensional gateway, and all sorts of demons are now loose in this State Park. Soon a creepy forest ranger named Asmodeus begins annoying this quartet of dweebs, and the fact that the guy hightails it from crucifixes

should've clued 'em in. A few sequences featuring grotty old demonologists and some low level enchantments only add more confusion to an already incoherent narrative, and when a big ol' demonic ape-creature hassles the kids, they kill it by poking it with a pointed stick (so much for the overwhelming power of evil, eh?). Yes, this is REALLY STOOPID stuff, folks—almost like an embellished



home movie. But luckily (for us) the filmmakers had a sense of humor to make up for the all-too-often tedium and technical gaffes (i.e. characters' clothing changing from shot to shot). Plus Danforth's brief, but cool effects are highlights, including a 10-foot-tall, blue neanderthal and a bat-winged devil. The only recognizable faces in the cast are Frank Bonner (Herb from WKRP), who makes a hapless hero, and author Fritz Leiber playing the missing professor (and lending the project its only credibility). A prime example of ridiculous, amateurish, seat-of-your-pants, fan filmmaking.

WOMEN AND BLOODY TERROR [a.k.a. HIS WIFE'S HABIT]

(1970). A New Orleans-lensed, psychedelic terror-fest about a nymphomaniac housewife? What more could anyone want?! So keep a cold six pack beside you at all times, and enjoy this wild throwback to the grand ol' days of shitty, trippy, drive-in cinema! Directed by Joy Houck Jr. (NIGHT OF BLOODY HORROR, which it was often double billed with), this flick may be incompetent, but it's crammed with ridiculous violence, unintentional laughs, and belovely bad fashion sense (bellbottoms, ugly male perms, go-go boots, and Jackson Pollackeque microskirts). Even when it goes flat, the film maintains that great, grainy veneer of early '70s tackiness... Georgina Darcy stars as Lauren Worthington, a 40-ish dame who's trying to stay young by screwing every male in the cast. She hits a few sleazy nightspots, flirts with some pretty boys, bounces from bed to bed, and becomes the obsession of a short, unshaven troll of a garage mechanic (Marcus J. Grapes). This psycho greasemonkey begins stalking the woman, peeking into her windows and, aided by neanderthal pal Zool, terrorizing Darcy and her daughter. But first we have to suffer through Darcy's parade of detestable one night stands (including an affair with her daughter's boyfriend, played by a young, scrawny Gerald McRaney), a little teenage trauma (thus giving the character an extra dimension of hoary cliches) and even a nightmare sequence (in the early '70s, that meant a couple red gels and a drunk cameraman). In other words, Shakespeare, it ain't. But after some bathetic revelations about Darcy's troubled psyche, Marcus J. Grapes (love that name!) reappears in order to snivel his way through a seedy finale, complete with a frantically moralistic ending that'll have you givin' raspberries to the screen. The middle of the pic gets long-winded (I used the opportunity to hit the fridge or take a leak), and unfortunately, it never rises above a low-key tawdriness. The New Orleans footage is top notch though, and when we enter a strobe-lit, trippy hangout, I was in hippie heaven! Complete with the hemorrhage-inducing sounds of Sonny Geraci and The Outsiders singing "Come On In" and "Mr. Funky". Overall, an idiotic, mildly enjoyable tale of dirtbags and middle-aged skags.

THE TWONKY (1953). Some movies, no matter how asinine, hold a nostalgic charm from when you first viewed them as a child. And you hope that decades later, when you see them again through more discerning, adult eyes, they don't end up completely sucking. Though THE TWONKY is no masterwork, it features a brilliant story idea, a wonderful lead actor, and tons of adolescent-level stupidity. B-movie fluff starring everyone's favorite weaselly character actor, Hans Conried (THE 5,000 FINGERS OF DR. T) and an evil new mind-controlling abomination called a Television! Directed by radio producer Arch Oboler (who obviously had no great love for the new-fangled medium of TV), it's the tale of college philosophy professor Conried and how his staid lifestyle is turned inside out when a television is delivered to his home. The set has some very unique features, such as how it doesn't need to be plugged in, hilariously hobbles around on its wooden feet, and emits a magical beam which can (1) light cigarettes, (2) create five dollar bills, or (3) hypnotize the

police. Nicknamed a "twonky" (something you can't explain) by an alcoholic neighbor, Conried slowly goes mad (in his own inimitable fashion) as the TV wiggles its antennae and creates havoc. Underlying all this foolishness are several not-so-subtle barbs about the loss of free will and the suspicion that the TV will end up ruling people's lives. For whenever Hans begins thinking about individualism and personal freedom, a little Twonky electroshock sets him straight, and all its hypnotized victims flatly utter "I have no complaints". When the college football team is recruited to destroy the Twonky, they too are turned into glassy-eyed zombies (not a big change, I admit). Eventually, the cops come after Hans for running a bordello, the feds for counterfeiting, and the film critics for outrageous overacting. While we learn that the Twonky is actually a futuristic servant, lost in time. The best parts of the film have Conried gloriously spazzing out and basted in booze, and the image of that damned television walking around is like some fragment from a comic mescaline hallucination. Completely overlooked when first released, this is an amiable comic fantasy with prescient paranoid elements.

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WOMEN AND BLOODY TERROR

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TERROR THAT EXPLODES IN A WILD NIGHTMARE



DEATH MAGIC (1992). This low budget, Arizona-lensed horror romp from director Paul Clinco starts off well enough. The prologue is set in the 19th century, with a lunatic army officer, Major Aaron Parker, hung for multiple murder. What really surprised me though, was the fact Clinco was able to round up several dozen extras (in indie terms, that makes this a virtual epic!), and also dug up period costumes for the entire bunch. Unfortunately, the moment the story cuts to the present, it straddles all the ancient horror cliches, starting with a group of young morons who're dabbling with the supernatural. All too predictably, these amateur necromancers conjure up the Mad Major's spirit, who's still pissed off about getting his neck stretched over a century ago. And wouldn't you know it, one of the present-day ladies is an exact double for the Major's old flame (gosh, that plot twist has only been used a dozen times this year, hasn't it?). The undead Major then begins popping up around town (always accompanied by tacky lighting), slaughtering the ancestors of the soldiers who originally sentenced him to death. As you can see, the plot is a NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET clone, but with a budget more in league with Herschell Gordon Lewis. It's a half-hour long concept, given the 95 minute, maximum-tedium treatment, with Clinco handing us limp romantic subplots, occult mumbo-jumbo, and a serious tone which doesn't suit a movie that features a googly-eyed cavalry officer chasing a naked girl around her bedroom. At least Jack Dunlap has a ball in the role of the Major, showing up just long enough to skewer a disposable cast member, and never sticking around long enough to embarrass himself (unlike the rest of the cast). A little nudity and some enjoyably cheesy special effects kept me mildly amused, but I still have a callous on my thumb from that Fast Forward button.

THE GHASTLY ONES (1969). Run for the hills, folks, because it's time to pay tribute to the legacy of Staten Island horror hack Andy Milligan. A true drive-in legend, despite the fact NO ONE seems to be able to sit through his boring fucking movies! His pics have almost nothing going for them. Flaccid amateur actors, a deadening pace, unfathomably overplotted storylines, and if there's any violence, it's barely visible since the hand-held camera was too busy giving you motion sickness. The one (barely) positive thing that can be said about Milligan is that he certainly stretched his paltry budgets to their maximum tensile strength. Because instead of simply slice 'n' dice, the guy wanted to give us scope and depth, as if he thought of himself as the DeMille of Dreck. Some of his flicks were period pieces set in England—when all we'd actually get were all of Andy's pals roaming around some field just outside N.Y.C., decked out in ill-fitting costumes on loan from a local theatre troupe. **THE GHASTLY ONES** is one of Milligan's first forays into cinemaliquor, followed by such coma-inducers as **BLOODTHIRSTY BUTCHERS**, **TORTURE DUNGEON** and **THE RATS ARE COMING!** **THE WERE-WOLVES ARE HERE!** Nowadays, Andy's still cranking 'em out, with **MONSTROSITY** and **THE**

WEIRDO proving that he can still make 'em like he used to (unfortunately)...Our story begins when a bunch of nondescript family members meet at an old Maine mansion for the reading of a

will, and after a seemingly endless tide of discussions, flirtations and arguments, Milligan assaults us with **EVEN MORE** numbing exposition. Giving drive-in audiences of that era time to hit the snack bar, make out with their date, give their car an oil change, and still not miss a goddamned thing! Bare minimum excitement is provided by Colin, the crazed gardener with the blacked-out teeth, who begins killing off the loquacious cast members (and therefore deserves a thank you card from the viewer), while some badly-shot gore is flashed onscreen (a stomach hacked up with a saw, the ol' pitchfork to the neck routine, et cetera). Who lives? Who dies? Who cares! The film's excruciating 73 minutes go by slower than a lap dance with Bea Arthur. And (hard to believe) it's not even close to his worst effort, simply another link in Milligan's long, painful cinematic legacy. It's tedious, ineptly filmed, and not for one instant frightening. But do you want to what IS frightening? Andy loved the plot of this flick so much that a decade later he remade the damned thing as **LEGACY OF BLOOD**. Heaven help us.



THE SWILL AND THE SWELL

Yes, there's even more. Since I don't want to waste too much space on studio slop or flicks that've actually gotten real publicity, here's a wrap-up of some other shit worth checking out or avoiding...A lot of people are getting pissed off at David Lynch, since he's turning into a one-dimensional cult figure resting on long past laurels. True. But even though **TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME** often looked like a friends-of-the-director pageant, it also boasted incredible set pieces, a creepy incest subtext, and the best sound design of the year. Let's hope Lynch leaves well enough alone and never touches the town again. Twin Peaks, R.I.P...But onto Lynch's more recent pay-TV project, **HOTEL ROOM**, which is a trio of half-hour tales, set in the same urban hotel room at different times in the century. The middle episode, directed by some hack pal of Lynch's and written by ex-flavor-of-the-month Jay McInerney, is annoying, obvious crap. At least the bookending segments were helmed by Dave. The first, featuring Harry Dean Stanton, is slight but amusing; but the concluding offers more proof that Crispin Glover can do no wrong. Glover plays a hick husband who's bringing his (possibly-insane) wife to the big city for treatment in the midst of a blackout, and the result is as captivatingly quirky (not to mention, touching) as anything Lynch has ever done. The guy's still got it, you just have to wade through the muck to find it...Speaking of Crispin Glover, any fan of his crackpot persona **MUST IMMEDIATELY** rent **RUBIN AND ED**. Barely distributed to theatres, Glover stars as a long-haired, striped-bell-bottomed, immense-platform-shoed geek who needs to find a burial place for his long-dead cat (which he lugs through the desert in an ice chest). As rumor has it, this is the character he was "testing out" on the Letterman Show when Crispin went spastic and tried karate-kicking Dave in the face (though I still think the guy was tripped out

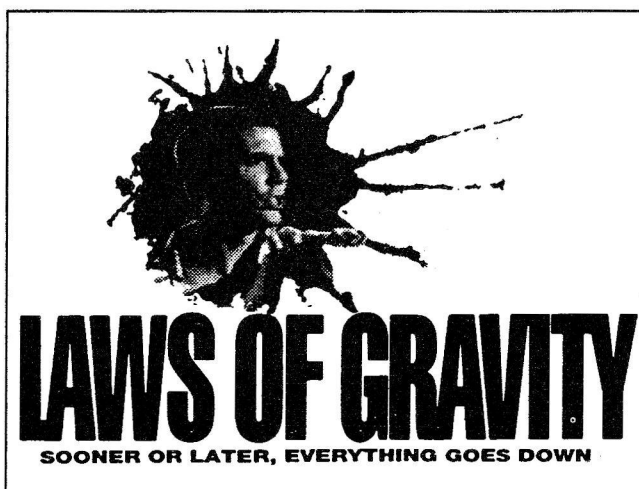
on acid). A truly stoopid movie, but Crispin is a warped genius...Let's move onto Dennis Hopper who, by all indication, has turned into an Establishment shithead for the '90s—possibly induced by his heavy-handed sobriety and multi-million dollar salaries. For proof, just try to sit through **NAILS**, where he plays a Dirty Harry-type cop who bends every civil right to get his way. Contemptible garbage, and even worse to think that it stars one of the counter-cultural icons of the '60s, who used to have respect for his fans. Take the money and run, Dennis—and while you're running, don't stop until you're far outta sight, so we can watch **EASY RIDER** and **OUT OF THE BLUE**, and remember you before you sold out to The Man...A slew of low-budget, independently produced films made their way through theatres last year, and though not all were gems, any of them were more interesting than the tripe handed out by the majors. (Can you believe all the hype given to compost like **A FEW GOOD MEN** and **SCENT OF A WOMAN**?) By far, the best of the lot was **RESERVOIR DOGS**, which featured a top-notch ensemble, sharp dialogue, and pitch black humor (which flew high above the heads of most of the moviegoers), as a band of cut-throat thieves hide out in a casket factory, peel away the layers, and bleed profusely...As for the controversial **BAD LIEUTENANT**, I was left cold by Abel Ferrara's NC-17 angst-fest, much as I wanted to like it. Despite some incredible sequences, you have to ask yourself if you want to spend 100 minutes watching Harvey Keitel (spectacularly over-the-top) playing a totally unredeemable, sexist, drug-addled asshole cop. Sure, the flick's sleazy, but it's never involving, and I didn't buy into the entire redemption finale. A superficial urban nightmare with plenty of ill laughs throughout (which I'll assume were intentional on Abel's part, since the guy's such a whacked thug of a filmmaker)...**IN THE SOUP**

is a B&W, NYC comedy that boasts the combo of Cassavetes-vet Seymour Cassel and Steve Buscemi, plus (the director's wife) Jennifer Beals. As in **RESERVOIR DOGS**, Buscemi steals every scene, but the rest of the film lays there like roadkill. Buscemi plays a struggling filmmaker (with the most realistic Lower East Side apartment I've ever seen on screen); Cassel is a wacky crook with a heart of gold, who shows Buscemi how to enjoy the magic of life (in other words, a vomitable old kook), and Beals is the attractive next door neighbor. Some laughs and innovative direction, but mostly just trendy predictability...On the arthouse circuit, Lars von Triers' **ZENTROPA** played in the city for months, which only goes to show you that a little technique and some perplexingly positive reviews will always haul in some lemmings. Frankly, I was falling asleep throughout, especially when narrator Max Von Sydow droned on...Sure, Woody and Mia's bickering 'n' backstabbing is front-page fodder for the tabloids, but that shouldn't take away from the fact that **HUSBANDS AND WIVES** is his best, most acidic film in years. Every time Allen is in some emotional crisis, he seems to come up with a radical new film that alienates all his smarmy **ANNIE HALL** fans.

Hand-held camerawork that'll have you reeling, totally-unlikable characters, and the most on-screen alcohol consumption since **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?** makes this a turbulent ride for romantics, but a field day for emotional cynics...Bill Pympton's **THE TUNE** is a cute little animated tale, which will hopefully get the guy the mainstream recognition he deserves. Though he works better in short format (his instructional film on "How to Kiss" is a seat-wetter), this is the story of a timid song-writer who's trying to win the girl, impress the boss and write a bunch of good tunes...British director Ken Loach has been making films for years—films that U.S. audiences rarely get a chance to see. His big(ish) budget break came with the political thriller **HIDDEN AGENDA**, but he's (thankfully) returned to his simpler roots with **RIFF RAFF**, which is the best film I've seen so far in '93. A working class comedy/drama, featuring a cast of virtual unknowns, it runs the gamut from broad laughs to bittersweet romance and has English accents so thick the distributor had it subtitled. Most impressively, it always seems completely real and altogether touching...Christopher Munch's **THE HOURS AND TIMES** is another film to seek out. Set in 1963, this low, low budget work postulates what might've happened when two male friends spend a weekend in Barcelona together. But since the two gents are John Lennon (just before the Beatles' skyrocket to fame) and queer manager Brian Epstein, the (hypothetical) answers are altogether fascinating. The two leads (Ian Hart and David Angus) gives impeccable performances, and Munch succeeds in making you care for these two as people, not just as cultural icons. Subtle, funny and brilliant...Poor Barbet Schroeder. From directing some of the best films of the '70s/'80s (**MAITRESSE**, **MORE**, **BARFLY**) to getting saddled with studio clone-work like **SINGLE WHITE FEMALE**. The first hour shows potential, but it's all downhill from there. I kept hoping much-loved Jennifer Jason Leigh (essaying your standard psycho bitch) would simply hack up the lovely but vapid Bridget Fonda and put an end to this increasingly hackneyed "thriller"...**HIGHWAY 61** is a very pleasant surprise. On the surface, it's yet another quirky road movie (cringe), but Canadian indie director Bruce MacDonald (**ROADKILL**) fills the journey with hilarious vignettes, ingratiating low-key characters, and one of the finest villains of the year (a bingo-

playing Satan-wannabee who buys up souls along the way)...**POISON IVY** got dumped on, but I think Katt Shea Ruben is one of America's finest B-directors, taking sleazy concepts and imbuing them with solid characters and a compelling urgency. (Remember, she actually got a good performance out of Christina Applegate in **STREETS**). Though never as all-out tawdry as you'd hope, the film's another fleshy showcase for Drew Barrymore, who's quickly becoming the trash goddess of the '90s...As further proof of Drew's allure, check out **GUNCRAZY**, the in-name-only remake of Joseph Lewis' incredible noir epic. Barrymore is once again cast as the tragic, slut teenager, who's used as a local sperm bank until she falls for ex-con James Le Gros. They shoot some guns, butt heads with authority figures, and eventually hit the road on an unintentional murder spree. A spot-on glimpse of white trash America, which unfortunately never kicks into high gear...For sheer kinetic energy, **LAWS OF GRAVITY** can't be beat. Filmed in Greenpoint, Brooklyn for only 38,000 bucks by first-time director Nick Gomez, it puts big studio slop to shame with its naturalistic cast, ear for dialogue, and powerhouse camerawork. It's just another slice of dead end life, populated by neighborhood

punks, two-bit hustlers and a few folks simply trying to make ends meet. They drink, they scream, they swear, slap around women, slap around each other, try to sell a few hot guns for rent money, and deal with fraying friendships. One of last year's best. Plus, much of the flick's set at The Ship's Mast, one of my favorite bars...But if you wanna talk about REALLY inexpensive (but terrific) movies, **EL MARIACHI** is the champ. The feature debut of Texan Richard Rodriguez, this guy cranked this pic out for only \$7,000 (with three of it coming from medical experimentation). Set in a seedy Mexican border town, it's the tale of a



roaming mariachi singer who gets involved in a gang war when he's mistaken for a kingpin assassin (who happens to carry his stockpile of weapons in a similarly looking guitar case). Obviously, Rodriguez grew up on cheap, crappy Mexican action flicks, and this pick would play even better on 178th Street in Spanish Harlem as it will in arthouses. Cheap humor, kickass gunplay and tons of in-your-face fun...If you're in the mood for the Feel Ridiculous Movie of the Year, I'll put in an early nomination for Sam Raimi's long-awaited **ARMY OF DARKNESS**. Low on gore, but high on screwball imagination, anything goes in this homage to everything from Ray Harryhausen and The Three Stooges, to Mark Twain and THE MANSTER. Action-packed and tongue-in-cheek, this is a movie for the twelve-year-old in all of us...It took actor-turned-director Barry Primus years to get **MISTRESS** made, and I'm glad he had so much patience. A glimpse into the world of moviemaking, but unlike THE PLAYER's big-wigs, this comedy/drama is set within the lower echelons of struggling writers, slimy producers, and money-men who all want a starring role for their current fling. Robert Wuhl (who I've always detested) is great as a filmmaker trying not to compromise his values, with support from Robert DeNiro, Martin Landau, and Chris Walken. I liked it better than THE PLAYER since the script's more honest, the characters are likable, and it's not preoccupied with in-jokes...And finally: **CANDYMAN**---ultra-slick, but the same of 'ELM STREET' shit. **SWOON**---though based on the sleazy Leopold and Loeb murder case, you'll need a handful of Vivarins to endure its artsy pretensions. **INNOCENT BLOOD**---Anne Parillaud's hot, Don Rickles is hilarious, and the pic's solid trash. And Tim Robbins' **BOB ROBERTS** is a brilliant, dead-on satire that's almost too close for comfort.



MUSIC VIDEOS

THE STORY OF CREATION (1992). This hour long video begins above a textile sweatshop in North East London, the headquarters of Creation Records, who've been spewing out some of today's most eclectic new music. And we're introduced to three of their breakthrough groups—mixing videos, live footage and interviews. First up is Primal Scream, who sing their semi-hit "Movin' On Up", along with other melodic tunes. Later, we meet Ride, a pack of youngsters punching out songs in the tradition of The Smiths, though with darker-hued edges such as in "Leave Them All Behind". If this video was devoted only to these two bands though, it wouldn't even garner a review. Both are fine if you like pleasant, trendy slop (and hell, they're more talented than most of the shit on the Billboard Charts), but they're left in the dust by My Bloody Valentine, one of my faves. They're hypnotic fuckers, with a wall of grunge and wailing, indecipherable lyrics. And their videos ("Soon", "Swallow", "To Here Knows When") suit their sound perfectly—long blasts of tripped-out, washed-out, multi-layered images, accompanied by sounds that are sure to put a stranglehold round your cerebellum. Additional kudos to their director, Angus Cameron, for his incredible eye. I could comfortably sedate myself to My Bloody Valentine for hours. Good to have a chance to see 'em early on, before they sell out.

EMERGENCY BROADCAST NETWORK: Commercial Entertainment Product (TVT Records; 1992). Thank goodness this videotape is "Totally safe when used in combination with other drugs or alcohol" (as the box proclaims), because I'd hate to think I was doing anything dangerous when I altered my senses and then popped this incredible half-hour trip into my VCR. EBN was a part of the '91 Lollapalooza Tour, and this visual/aural barrage is a sampling of their SubGenius-level brilliance. Eleven short, cynical vignettes featuring hip-hop media collages that reminded me of Bruce Conner on mescaline. But its politically aware brilliance and editing savvy take us into a new realm, by sampling bits of media foolishness and network sound bites, taking a savage razor to it, and reshaping it for their own means (such as taking a Bush speech and skillfully turning his words into "We Will, We Will Rock You"). EBN has no love for gingoistic military might or politicians, and they do their damndest to make clowns out of 'em all. Their kickass opener, "Psychoactive Drugs", manages to intercut shitheel Bush with Mr. Rogers, along with Dan Rather war footage, Mariah Carey's squealing, and a funky "Get Down, Get Down" from Harrison Ford. Sounds confusing? Nope. It's just the result of a little imagination and loads of video hardware. The ensemble's impressive mobile audio/video vehicle even gets a plug, and overall, this is a trippy barrage that's elegantly edited for maximum silliness.

THE VOLUPTUOUS HORROR OF KAREN BLACK: Fear of a Karen Black Planet (1992). Headed by lead singer/shock diva Kembra Pfahler, this band is truly one of NYC's most perversely enthralling acts, mixing performance art and music into a provocative package. After dragging their collective asses through the barroom circuit for years, Karen Black is slowly getting the attention they richly deserve, and though this half-hour portrait never captures their raw, on-stage power (which is only aided by the fact you're drunk and crammed in a 95 degree club), it comes damned close. Much of the tape is simple, two-camera, one-take recordings of their show, mixed with interview snippets of Kembra and bassist Samoa relaxing at home. Recorded at The Marquee and The Kitchen, and introduced by Joe Coleman, the music often takes a backseat to their surreal, hypnotic performance style. Kembra is often nude, but for blue body paint, the ensemble wears huge flower petals around their faces, cardboard waves flow across the stage, and there's occasionally so much smoke that it's difficult to see the band. With limited cash and unlimited imagination, they turn out one of the most mind-alteringly shows in town, swaddling their song list in humor and horror. If you have the chance to see Kembra et al live, seek them out NOW! If not, this video will give you a taste of their one-of-a-kind charisma.



GIRL BITE BACK (STUDIO 47; 1992). Filmed in Germany in 1980, this is a wild glimpse at a diverse selection of (then) cutting

edge "girl groups". Director Wolfgang Buld has been sitting on this footage for a decade, and it's about fucking time he got it to video! Though the interview footage is predominantly lame, the on-stage antics are incredible! From the brash rock 'n' roll of Girlschool, to the performance art punk of The Slits (with their great, gonzo variation of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine"), plus a look at Siouxsie and the Banshees doing their early hit "Christine". At only 40 minutes, it all goes by too fast, but they save the best for last, with Nina Hagen screaming, bellowing, growling the ultimate cover of "Ziggy Stardust", complete with rat's nest hair-do, baby doll nightie and make-up overdose. These women are hard, harsh, honest, sexy, and (for the most part) talented as hell. An amazing time capsule.

BORN TO BOOGIE (1972). Marc Bolan and T. Rex were a seminal band of the early '70s, and this hour long pic from director Ringo Starr captures them at their peak (which to some, still ain't saying much). So set the Way Back Machine for '72, when the psychedelic era was

all but burnt out, and all that was left were some idiotically-dressed, heavily-permed bands such as British sensation T. Rex. Primarily consisting of concert footage taken at the frenetic Empire Pool at Wembley, plus fantasy sequences which look like leftovers from *MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR*, the film rides the fence between nostalgia and simple annoyance. There's Bolan, strutting around in white pancake make-up and Mad Hatter chapeau; all their teenage glitter fans; and the sheer pretentiousness of the entire scene. But after awhile (and against my better judgement), the flick won me over with its naive charm and great guitar-heavy tunes, like "Baby Strange", "Children of the Revolution", "Cosmic Dancer", and concert highlight "Get It On". Another highlight is a T.Rex studio session featuring Elton John on keyboards and a rabbi-like Ringo on drums, dishing out a high-spirited (if spastic) "Tutti Frutti". I overdosed on the repetitious shots of screaming fans though—ugly misfits with overbites, having apoplexy at the sight of these hairballs. At times they nearly drown out the songs, and it's almost as if director Ringo was vicariously reliving the ol' days of The Beatles and own their writhing, wailing throngs...All in all, essential viewing for fans of the late, great Bolan.

MUSIC

TOM WAITS "Bone Machine" (Island Records). In *BONE MACHINE*, Tom Waits is still raiding chaingangs, gas stations, tattoos, oak trees and sterno cans for his strangely corvine poetry, and he's still, thank god, peddling subterrestrial ballads and old-fashioned hoodoo...With "Earth Died Screaming" we get a spirited, bone clattering little tune that Tom walks through with a sick inevitability, followed immediately by the dirgey "Dirt in the Ground". (Here you start to understand what kind of child Waits must have been: he would have never crossed the street to avoid the shadows falling from Bellevue Hospital.) What follows are a couple of songs that lose themselves in willful tunelessness or simply collapse under his uneven Warren Oates growl. Perhaps the eeriest and best track on the album, though, is "The Ocean Doesn't Want Me". His pipped voice comes down from something that is supposed to be either a submarine's speakerphone or a deaf man's parabola:

The ocean doesn't want me today
But I'll be back tomorrow to play
And the stranglers will take me
Down deep in their brine
The mischievous braingels
Down into the endless blue wine
I'll open my head and let out
All my time.

I'd love to go drowning
And to stay and to stay
But the ocean doesn't want me today...

This is followed by the less redemptive "Jesus Gonna Be Here", a beautiful little prison song in the Leadbelly tradition. "A Little Rain" is the most successful slow song, a nice break from the vermicula, which, nevertheless, comes screaming back down the hall with "In the Colosseum", a bloody political satire of some kind, but fun. In "Black Wings" his voice hits the perfect river bottom, which he's been working and smoking and drinking toward since the early '70s. "I Don't Wanna Grow Up" is a great clogging song (although I'm terrified that John Denver will get a hold of it). By the way, that video is the silliest goddamn thing I've ever seen and should not be missed...Musically, not every song hits its mark, but we still feel as if we're in the hands of a potential master. The lyrics to this latest album are so solidly created that you can dry-

tear them word from word, limb from limb. And the incidental music's ominous clanking, whining and screeching are like the oiled layers of a car engine. Even though *BONE MACHINE* is not as good as *RAIN DOGS*, it's still clear that Waits is pushing some kind of Weill-like immortality. His music has always had the weird appeal of a monkey's paw, and each album has inherited this intense momentum. As if Tom Waits were a fallen angel on the run, his lyrics wander and stagger over every industrially orphaned inch of this country. From album to album, from barge to boxcar, flatbed to barstool, the movement skulks lower each time until it reaches the comfortably demonic level of a Weimeraner. —Joan Mathieu

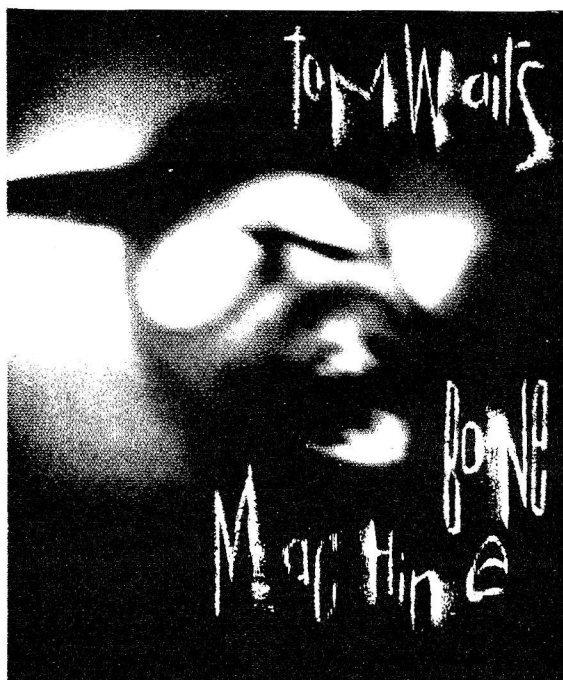
KING MISSILE "Happy Hour" (Atlantic). This is a blast of urban loneliness, raw anger, rancid love, and removable genitalia, proving that John S. Hall is a god of gutter-forged lyrics. How can you NOT love a tribute entitled "Martin Scorsese"---about encountering Marty and beating him to death because he makes "the best fucking films I've ever seen." Or the tale of the pesky "Detachable Penis" ("I woke up this morning with a bad hangover and my penis was missing again..."). Or the masochistic love song of the decade, "Take Me Home" ("You're the one I trust enough to hurt me."). Some poppier tunes are tossed in, but those fade quickly---leaving Hall's caustic, cosmic rants lingering in the darker recesses, and sounding a bit like Bongwater crossed with a maniacal street preacher. A mixed bag, for sure, but the highs are without equal. Essential shit.

BOB Z. "Prisoncamp Reality" (Panic Button Press, P.O. Box 14318, San Francisco, CA 94114; \$5.95). The legendary, notorious Bob Z is a staple of the underground scene, and most of you know him from his incredible music/weirdness mag *BAD NEWZ*. This audio tape contains a dozen or so of his evocative poems, backed by

grungy drunken guitarwork, and plenty of feedback and reverb. Don't expect anything light-hearted though, because these are dark, evil visions scraped from the sidewalks of urban cesspools, laced with a surprising amount of humor and heart. With titles like "Shining Silver Tit Ring", "Defecator" and "Burning My notebook", Bob Z gives us crystal portraits of human existence, whether it's dealing with authority, sex, or the day-to-day cruelty we're all subjected to. Great stuff!

JULIANA HATFIELD "Hey Babe" (Mammoth). As you listen to this wonderful debut album, you realize just how snide the title is, because Juliana's lyrics overflow with romantic pain and razored cynicism toward relationships and men. Formerly of the Blake Babies, Hatfield brings

a meatier sound to her solo endeavor, and manages to include all the required pop hooks. Her voice has an impressive range and emotional texture, with a Little Girl Lost quality that only adds to the feast, as she wrings out some beautiful tunes between the tears and frustration. And her songs are simple, harmonious and heartfelt, including "Everybody Loves Me But You", "I See You" and "Ugly". This savagely sweet album from the enticing Ms. Hatfield has held a place in my stereo for months. And though she finds no clear answers to her angst this time around, let's hope they're on the horizon for her.



ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE BRODSKY QUARTET "The Juliet Letters" (Warner Brothers). It seems Mr. MacManus has reached the enviable point in his career where he can do anything he wants to. And in his case it usually works—whether it's his brief country/western phase, or the greatest broken-hearted, poison-pen letter of all time, "Blood and Chocolate". This time around he links up with a string quartet, gives us songs loosely based on letters to Shakespeare's Juliet, and doesn't forget to toss in his often venomous lyrics ("Thank you for the flowers/ I threw them on the fire/ And I burned the photographs you had enclosed/ GOD they were ugly children"). At first listen, the result is certainly odd, but under the classical rifts lies Costello's old ways. Each song tells a story bathed in memory and lost love, and at times they even sound like twisted Broadway show tunes. A bequiling experiment which floats to the heavens, even as Elvis takes a moment to aim a lugie down below.

BOOKS

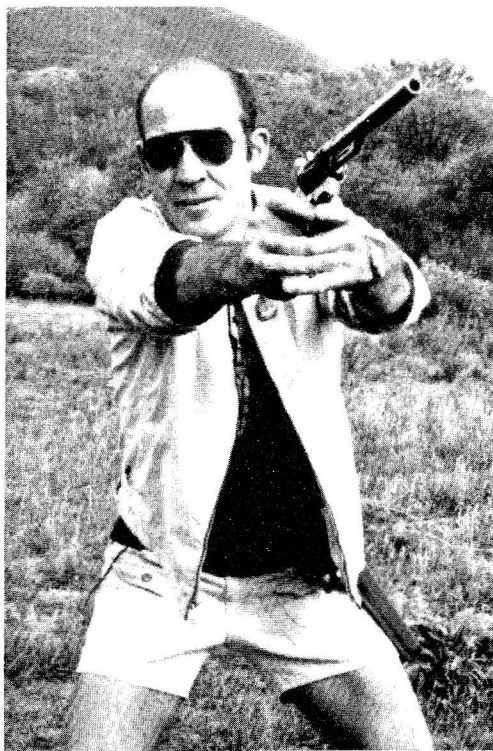
FEAR AND LOATHING: THE STRANGE AND TERRIBLE SAGA OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON by Paul Perry (Thunder Mouth Press; \$22.95). The first thing to keep in mind about this unauthorized bio of outlaw journalist Thompson is the undeniable fact that author Perry is a devoted fan of Hunter's work and lifestyle. The end product is like an Acid-laced Valentine—certainly weird enough, but all too sweet to fit its subject matter. The author has done his homework though, by digging up virtually everyone who ever had contact with Thompson, right down to childhood sweethearts. Beginning with his first drink as a high school sophomore, Perry runs through all the books, events, anecdotes, fame, all 'dat shit. Never digging too deep, but giving us all the facts we'd ever need to know about the guy. From struggling in N.Y.C. while in his twenties, to his San Francisco days with the Hell's Angels, and his hilarious candidacy for Aspen sheriff. His unpublished novels, *PRINCE JELLYFISH* and *THE RUM DIARY*, and his turbulent relationships with friends and editors alike (Ralph Steadman, Jann Wenner and, of course, Oscar Acosta) are detailed, not to mention Thompson's personal advice on the best drugs to be on while writing (speed and alcohol—the same combo that was used to grind out this issue of SHOCK CINEMA). And while chronicling Thompson's past, the reader also gets a solid overview of an era long gone, as well as a mini pharmacological history lesson.

Perry's dry, journalistic edge is frustrating at times, since he never seems to find that dark and damaged side of Thompson's life—that combination of genius, drugs and insanity that produce those moments of "perfect clarity." Though an impressive overview of the good Doctor and his high times, it all seems rather unnecessary since Thompson has always been his own best (not to mention, most vitriolic) biographer. I'd suggest re-reading the real thing instead.

DINO: LIVING HIGH IN THE DIRTY BUSINESS OF DREAMS by Nick Tosches (Doubleday; 572 pages). If all you know about Dean Martin is the image of the cocktail-swiggling lecher who crooned his way through Martin & Lewis comedies, or the besotted host of celebrity roasts, then this mammoth biography is well worth a look. Author Tosches gives us Dino, warts and all—his dalliances with the

ladies, bad business decisions, and his ever-notorious "fuck everything" attitude. Beginning with his childhood in Steubenville, little Dino Crocetti soon becomes a "wop wonder" singing sensation, and first formulates his life-long cynicism about romance ("Love was a racket. It was like booze. It exhilarated you, it transported you, and in the end, it fucked you over and left you feeling like shit."). Some of the book's best moments detail his tumultuous teaming with Jerry Lewis (sweetly nicknamed the "guinea" and "the monkey"), from their catapult to stardom and avalanche of mutual hatred. We get the beginnings of The Rat Pack; odd bedfellows such as Frank Sinatra, Sam Giancana and John F. Kennedy; and Martin's evolution into a Las Vegasized lounge lizard who wanted nothing more than "a bottle of scotch, a blowjob, and a million bucks". Along the way, Dean emerges as sad figure—with the show biz turning the guy into a self-parody of his early hot shot image. His terrible movies grossed millions in the '60s, he stumbled blindly through a #1 rated TV variety show in the '70s, and by the '80s Dean was living on a Percodan and scotch diet. Tosches charts Martin's career with a friendly, laid-back style, though his tendency toward heavyhanded foreshadowing occasionally gets the best of him. And Martin becomes the archetype of how the entertainment industry can eat a man up from the inside. Exhaustively detailed (nearly 125 pages are spent on a discography, filmography and assorted end notes!), this bittersweet bio is filled

with unexpected pathos for a man who always seemed like just another drunken, sexist shitheel.



THE NEW POVERTY ROW by Fred Olen Ray (McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; 29.95 ppd). This informative look into the low-rent motion picture business takes the reader from the early years of roadshow four-wallers, right up to today's churn-'em-out video companies. Author Fred Olen Ray focuses his attention on indie filmmakers who were tired of being ripped off, and cut out the middleman by acting as their own distributors. And Ray certainly knows the territory inside out, since he's made a successful career out of marketing his own long list of no-budget wonders. Primarily, we get the inside scoop on the most notorious drive-in distributors of the '60s and '70s, and their all-time schlock classics. There's Independent-International Pictures (*SATAN'S SADISTS*), American General Pictures (*SPIDER BABY*), and one of my faves, Dimension Pictures (the geniuses who gave us *SWEET SUGAR*, *INVASION OF THE BEE GIRLS* and *DOLEMITE!*). Plus there are

plenty of laughs at the expense of Jerry Warren's cut 'n' paste career—the guy would take some lousy foreign-made horror flick, toss in a couple sequences with crusty John Carradine, edit in some stock footage he had laying around, and release it with a luridly deceptive ad campaign. Of course, the final chapter is closest to the author's heart, because he devotes it to his own company, American Independent Productions. Giving the reader a mini-autobiography of how he started with a \$12,000 pic, and turned it into a career which has him cranking out a seemingly-endless parade of celluloid dreck (featuring whatever down-on-their-luck character actor he can coerse out of retirement). Written in a crisp, anecdotal style, you can tell Ray is a huge fan of all his subjects, with his enthusiasm (not to mention, sense of humor) keeping the book entertaining. Although it never digs too deep, it's a fine overview for nostalgic sleazemavens.

HOWARD STREET by Nathan C. Heard (AMOK Books, 1764 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90027; \$9.95). Way back in 1968, when Nathan Heard was just getting out of the joint, Trenton State Pen, to be exact, his first novel was being published by Dial Press. He served eight years for armed robbery, time spent on being a celebrated jailhouse athlete, jazz band leader and the author of **HOWARD STREET**, a graphic, hard-bitten novel about life on the streets of Newark, NJ. Recently re-released by AMOK Books, **HOWARD STREET** describes the ebb and flow of the human tide along a desolate strip of long-gone seedy nightclubs, tenements, hot-sheets motels, church meeting halls, and back alleys, exactly the world where Heard grew up, raised by his grandmother and mother, blues singer Gladys Pruitt. The book has as its cast of characters various pimps, hookers, junkies, thieves, and small-time hustlers, and this underlying theme: "A man can't fool with the Golden Rule in a crowd that don't play fair." The basic plot concerns Gypsy Pearl, the prettiest pro on the street, her pimp, a drug addict named Hip Ritchwood and his square brother, Franchot, who tries to reform Hip. Hip repays him by turning his apartment into a shooting gallery and offering his woman as payment for the rent. Gypsy Pearl, who turns tricks with a sponge so the johns aren't really touching her, and Franchot fall in love, but in the end, no one is really saved, least of all Gypsy, who has too much of the street in her to ever stop being a party girl. Apparently whores are too brainwashed to ever betray the Call-Girl Code of Honor, which extends to hiding your man's smack between your legs, even when you know the prison matron might search for it there. Because the book was published in 1968, you can dig some new/old slang like "stuffer" (a junkie) and "doogie" (dope), but the conversations in the M&M Bar or the ones of junkies on the nod that Heard describes could just as easily be taking place in 1993. When a fellow doper O.D.'s, everybody still reacts by trying to find the pusher that sold him such kickass stuff, just as they do in **HOWARD STREET**. It ain't Sesame Street, that's for sure, but most of us live somewhere in between, so it's good to cross over the tracks into a bad neighborhood sometimes, just to see that life is lived the same all over. —Mary Schafer

LOW LIFE by Luc Sante (Vintage; 414 pages; \$14). This book is required reading for any New York City resident who thinks the place is the ultimate pit of filth, crime, depravity, and degradation. Because author Sante gives us a fascinating, in-depth portrait of N.Y.C. from the mid-1800's to 1919—when the place REALLY sucked! Pulling information from other fine books on the subject, such as **THE GANGS OF NEW YORK**, and then tying it all together into one comprehensive volume, filled with photos and sleazy anecdotes. Though essentially written like a textbook-dry history lesson, the subject matter is so damned gritty that if you can ignore Sante's heavy-handed approach, you'll find loads to enjoy. It begins back in the days when Manhattan was primarily farmland, but the second immigrants began pouring into the country, tenements began sprouting up in areas that would commonly become known as the Bowery, Hell's Kitchen, and the Lower East Side. Sante meticulously details the horrible living conditions of the 19th century with cholera, tuberculosis and typhoid-ravaged boarding houses stuffed with the poor. Yep, it's the good ol' days, folks, complete with packs of homeless, orphaned children stealing and sleeping on steam-gratings for warmth. Plus starving, poverty-stricken bohemians/anarchists hanging out in Tompkins Square cafes, scamming a free lunch (hmm, I guess some things haven't changed much after all). Crime was rampant, street gangs were at their apex, and even back then the cops and politicians were totally corrupt and useless. But my favorite sections of the book were those detailing the entertainment of that era, whether it was cheap burlesque theatres, dark and dangerous saloons (complete with mickeyed drinks), or opium, gambling and prostitution dens. And whenever Sante's meticulous research be-

gins to get tedious, he reels you back in with a startling photo (like the cheery pic of a pre-Sanitation Department Varick Street, with four feet of offal piled in the gutters) or a belovedly obscure fact (Did you know that in 1897, there was one saloon for every 208 residents? I think the only town with that low a ratio nowadays is New Paltz). Heavy going at times, but well worth a look.

MAGAZINES/ SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Note: All addresses/prices are taken from the most current issue to hit my mailbox. In the case of many 'zines, addresses change, cover prices increase, and people disappear from the face of the planet at a moment's notice...You send your money, you take your chances.

THE BETTY PAGES #8 (88 Lexington Ave. Suite 2E, New York, NY 10016; \$6 per issue). This slick, digest-sized mag is essential for any fan of striptease diva Betty Page who, three decades after her disappearance from the scene, is still achieving her goal of spontaneously combusting the male population of the planet Earth. Packed with the career and photo legacy of the first lady of fetish, this issue includes a guide to Betty products, tales of her early years, plus page after page of rare, glorious pix of Betty in every state of undress.

GORE GAZETTE #108 (Rick Sullivan, 469 Hazel Street. Clifton, NJ 07011; \$13 for 12 issues). What do you mean, you don't have a subscription yet?! Get on the fuckin' ball and send your bucks to the Rt. Rev. Rick, for what is STILL the BEST sleaze-film 'zine on the planet. So goddamned hilarious that you'll shit your pants.

CHILDREN OF A FAR GREATER GOD #2 (Miles Wood, 2nd Floor, 221 Ashmore Road, Queens Park, London W9 3DB, England). Can you believe it? A 32-page 'zine devoted entirely to MARRIED...WITH CHILDREN. An episode guide, star bios, and humorous tidbits about one of the few TV shows worth wasting your time on. Editor Wood scours the world for P.R. info and useless trivia, and especially enjoys focusing on sultry guest stars like Traci Lords and Teri Weigel. The highlight of #2 is a lengthy review of Christina Applegate's surprisingly potent **STREETS**. Odd, but quite likable.

HIGHBALL #1 (Kronos Publications, MPO Box 67, Oberlin, Ohio 44074-0067; \$6.95). This is a MUST for fans of sexploitation flicks! **HIGHBALL** primarily covers the golden era of the '60s, when T&A auteurs kept grindhouses alive. Includes reviews, rare ad slicks, and delicious reminiscences from some of the kingpins of the nudie biz. Plus an article on Bridget Bardot, and a history of German sex pics! And thanks to Mike Vraney's line of **Something Weird Video**, many of these classics are now available! (Send for his catalog NOW! \$3 to S.W.V. Catalog, P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133). The cover promises "A Heady Cocktail of Pleasure and Pain", and it delivers!

EXPLOITATION RETROSPECT #36 (Dan Taylor, P.O. Box 1155, Haddonfield, NJ 08033-0708; \$1 apiece). This 24-page, digest-sized 'zine is one of the oldest, regularly-published mags on the market. Editor Dan Taylor doesn't simply focus on cinematic sleaze though—that's why his 'zine stays fresh. He includes heavy doses of music, books, and American culture, and in #36 he turns toward literature, with well-written articles on Faulker's Hollywood career and British crime novels, plus an interview with author James Ellroy.

THE COCKTAIL HOUR #4 (Mary Schafer, 326 Graham Ave., c/o The Elk's Head Lounge, Brooklyn, NY 11211). This lil' xeroxed 'zine contains a small wealth of information on the Three Indispensable D's: Dives, Diners and Dames. #4 contains drink recipes, a NYC bar review, a visit to the tombstone of Billie Holiday, and assorted kitschy clip art. Good fun for gentlemen of leisure and their boozy skirts.

VIDEOOZE #4 (P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304; \$3 per issue). Certainly one of the slickest 'zines on the market. The text is beautifully typeset, plus the writing is solid, with reviews of ultra-obscure European horror flicks such as Fulci's *WHEN ALICE BROKE THE MIRROR*. My only criticism is that the mag is so long-winded (Do we really need a 7-page article on the differences between the European and U.S. cuts of Bava's *LISA AND THE DEVIL*? I think not), that it loses the spontaneous, gonzo flavor of the very best 'zines. Still, an impressive package.

DIVINITY #2 (Divine Press, c/o David Flint, P.O. Box 108, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 4DD, England; \$7 apiece for U.S. orders). One of my favorite new magazines! Boldly promising to "explore the uncharted realms of psycho-eros", editor Flint gives us a 52-page magazine devoted to the world of violence, fetishes, and general sleaze, which is the most refreshingly original publication I received all year. Humorous and intelligent (what other editor could move so effortlessly from a tribute to U.K. sex queen Mary Millington to an analysis of *LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD*?), it includes an interview with ex-Throbbing Gristler Corey Fanni Tutti, the Japanese art of Kinbaku (rope bondage), and an eclectic mix of events, clubs, indie cinema, and cheap (albeit sometimes painful) thrills. Get it!

STICKY CARPET DIGEST #16 (Tom Deja, 55-35 Myrtle Avenue, Top Floor, Ridewood, NY 11385; \$1 per issue). First, let me tell you that this newsletter is a mess to look at, with a "paste-up" that seems to have been perpetrated by Mr. Magoo with the D.T.'s. But where else can you get pro-level writing equipped with a punchy, ingratiating style; a wide variety of film genres and straight-to-video swill; dozens of alternative record reviews; and (in the current issue) an interview with Larry Kurwin, the lead singer of *BLACK 47*.

TRASH COMPACTOR Vol. 2 #6 (253 College Street, Suite #108, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R5; \$3.75 per issue). This brethren 'zine is the closest you'll ever come to the *SHOCK CINEMA* sensibilities in another mag. In other words, these folks love the same type of swill I've been suckin' up for years, and this is a kickass mag. Huge, beautiful ad slicks; insightful reviews; and a pure love of the grindhouse glory years (the latest issue I received was a wondrous retrospect of the blaxploitation era) makes this definitely worth a look.

FILMMAKER #2 (5550 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 204, Los Angeles, CA 90036-3888; \$14 for 4 issues). Yes, I realize that this is pro-level magazine, but it's also the best new mass-market publication on the stands. Focusing on the exploding realm of independent filmmaking, it's *AMERICAN FILM* without any of the studio P.R. bullshit. The latest includes interviews with Abel Ferrara, Alex Cox, Quentin Tarantino, and Alexandre Rockwell, an article on Hong Kong cinema, and Rick Linklater's new project. *FILMMAKER* is an intelligent, cover-to-cover read for moviegoers tired of multi-million dollar swill.

SKAM #11 (Richard Akiyama, P.O. Box 240226, Honolulu, HI 96824-0226; \$7 for 3 issues). The current edition of this 36-page 'zine is another of SKAM's loving tributes to Hong Kong cinema, with exhaustive reviews of *HARD-BOILED*, *ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA II*, *SWORDMAN*, and other kickass obscurities. Add some mainstream video trash, and you get an eclectic, enjoyable mag.

WEIRD CITY #4 (Dave Szurek, 1206 Wheeler #1, Hoquiam, Washington 98550-1901; \$2 per issue/CASH ONLY). Szurek's film 'zine is exactly like his letters--- long-winded, rambling, and full of an enthusiasm that harkens back to the early days of fandom. 37 pages crammed with print (I'm talkin' a solid page of single-spaced type, tiny margins, and no illos!), Dave pulls no punches with his opinions, and he's one of the few remaining original voices in the film 'zine world.

HEADPRESS #5 (P.O. Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 4ET, Great Britain; \$7). The best 'zines seem to be coming out of England these days, as evidenced by this twisted publication. Editors David Kerekes and David Slater are a disturbed pair, and this 64-page mag covers a little of everything (as long as it's either morally bankrupt or socially deviant). #5 includes an interview with filmmaker Andy Bullock, a hilarious tribute to anal sex, plus a meticulous, 23-page history of 1980's infamous Sunset Strip Murders. Not to mention music, books, cinema, and plenty of sick pix. Check it out.

NUTHING SACRED #5 (P.O. Box 3516, Hollywood, CA 90078; \$10 for 6 issues). I initially grabbed this mag for its extensive (and surprisingly lucid) interview with Nick Zedd, plus a hilarious phone conversation with Richard Kern (recalling not-so-nostalgically his past with Zedd). Overall, a solid, raw culture 'zine, including the usual pretentious poetry, fiction, a cool tale about scoring acid on Venice Beach, and the rock 'n' roll diaries of goddess Pleasant Gehman.

GUTTER TRASH #2 (Mike Tsaros, 1740 Mulford Avenue, Bronx, NY 10461; \$4). This is a 'zine that truly lives up to its name. The latest issue of this crude trash culture mag is devoted to "Strippers, Starlets and Sluts". Everyone from Betty Page to Lydia Lunch to Casandra Stark is featured, with a short paragraph and big, grainy xeroxed photos. Includes the jaw-dropping "Ramblings of a Psychotic Editor", which gives us a nightmarish tour of his personal life. Yow!

FEMME FATALES #3 (P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303; \$18 for 4 issues). This latest endeavor from the publishers of *CINEFANTASTIQUE* doesn't warrant any publicity, but I wanted to include it because it's without question the most grating, suck-up mag to hit the stands in years. A tribute to "the luscious ladies of horror, fantasy and science fiction," it's simply an excuse to print T&A publicity shots of various B-level starlets, accompanied by insipidly bland interviews. Devoid of any intellect, or even the guts to admit that it's nothing but masturbatory fodder for video shut-ins.

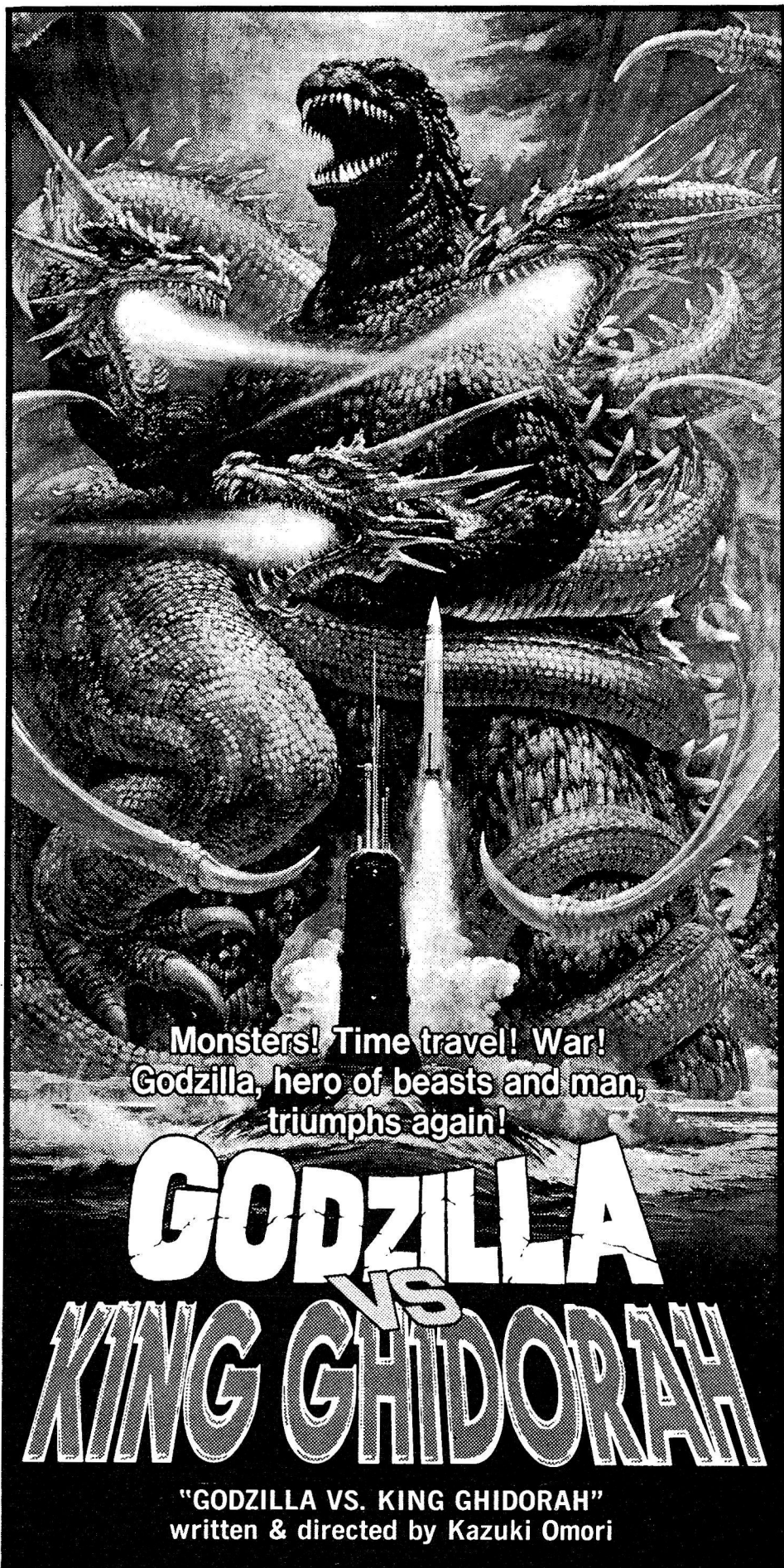
FATAL VISIONS #13 (Michael Helms, P.O. Box 133, Northcote, VIC 3070, Australia; \$6 per issue). One of the best designed, most intelligently written schlock-film mags on the market, and editor Michael Helms just keeps improving it with every issue. The latest includes an overview of Mexploitation films; interviews with director Tsui Hark, ex-Partridge Family gnome Danny Bonaduce, and porn-goddess Hypatia Lee; plus pages of movie, video and books reviews.

BLUE PERSUASION #1 (Aaron Lee, 603 E. Main #2, Lexington, KY 40508; \$2.50). Crude, amateurish and HILARIOUS! A digest-sized 'zine that takes on lowbrow culture with a rusty pick axe. Included is a howlin' review of porn-slob Jerry Butler's tell-all chronicle, *RAW TALENT*; an account of a Lisa Suckdog show; a jaw-dropping review of The Archies' Greatest Hits; a tribute to self abuse; plus plenty of first-person rants. Cheap, crass, in-your-face fun!

GRINDHOUSE #10 (J. Adler, P.O. Box 1370, New York, NY 10156; \$7 for a subscription). This whacked 'zine has always been a laugh-out-loud fave, with Adler hitting the dregs of New York City in search of grade-Z crap. But the best thing about this 6-page newsletter? Besides his cool rants and no-bullshit opinions ("Skip it!" "Snore."), it's ALL handwritten in a messy, eye-straining scrawl! Yeah!

FORBIDDEN ZONE #1 (Jeff Smith, 1817 Oates Dr. Apt. 529, Mesquite, TX 75150; \$10 for 5 issues, or \$3 per issue). After eight years of editing *WET PAINT*, Jeff sets his sights on this new digest-sized, which covers even more diverse territory. Literate articles on "Godzilla vs. Ultraman"; director Jack Arnold; dissing Ren & Stimpy; and plenty of fine artwork and capsule film reviews.

George Kuchar
Jodorowsky
Shinya Tsukamoto
Peter Jackson
Michael Almereyda
Ann-Margret
Jerzy Skolimowski
Russ Meyer
Monique Gabrielle
David Toma
Monte Hellman
Nick Zedd
Jerry Lewis
Klaus Kinski
Sonny and Cher
Brigitte Lahaie
Joe Christ
Santa Claus
Marquis DeSade
Gamera
Yoko Ono
Larry Cohen
H.G. Lewis
Robert Altman
The Rolling Stones
Beatrice Dalle
Andy Milligan
Tom Waits
Andy Kaufman
Bikers, Beatniks
Serial Killers
Giant Monsters
Strippers
Satanists, L.S.D.
And plenty of beer!



Monsters! Time travel! War!
Godzilla, hero of beasts and man,
triumphs again!

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH

"GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH"
written & directed by Kazuki Omori